

BIBLICAL BRAIN TEASERS

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Many of the examples below raise issues that are not in themselves very important. We offer them, however, as (1) “exercises” in hermeneutical creativity on matters where frankly it does not hurt to be wrong. Besides, it is not healthy to get in the habit of “dodging” critical issues because they impact (2) evaluating biblical accuracy. Though the points themselves are often not significant, their existence in a religious text does raise a point that is significant—whether people can trust the biblical accounts. Distrusting them for unnecessary reasons should be avoided, and we cannot legitimately trust them without correct exegetical work as a means of properly avoiding unnecessary criticism of scripture.

On many of these “brain teasers” more than one answer can account for the facts. The aim is to produce as many such answers as possible, not to stop after hitting on one. The value of this practice is that a later solution may better suit the features of the problem, which a person will never notice if he stops when the first plausible answer suggests itself.

Analogical reasoning can be applied only to the extent of common areas between the objects compared. Christ conquers evil; therefore no one will be lost because that would mean he failed. Failure is always relative to purpose. If the purpose is to have people in positive interpersonal relationships, then it involves their wills. Conquest (military or athletic) does not involve the assent of others, but reconciliation does. So there is no failure on God’s part—only on people’s part who refuse. Conquest and reconciliation do not share enough common elements to make universalism (number of the ones conquered) a legitimate inference.

Genesis **1** says that mankind was created last, but in Genesis **2** he is created first. Which is it or is it neither? What assumptions are involved in raising this question in the first place?

1. Consider a topical vs. chronological layout from Genesis **2** to Genesis **1**.
2. Consider also the question about literary genre. If Genesis **1** and **2** are separate parabolic representations (in whatever degree of correlation to what actually occurred), details—especially in comparisons between these two representations—are not to be pressed because they are apt to be scenery in the presentation and are present to round out the picture the author chose as the vehicle of expression.

Genesis **2:18**: *“It is not good that man should be alone.”*

BUT

1 Corinthians **7:1** says, *“It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”*

1. Genesis 2 is a generality; Paul addresses an exceptional matter. In Corinthians he is speaking to a situation where persecution could make married life more emotionally tempting to apostasy.
 2. Genesis may be more concerned with social provision for one who, being created in the image of God, was constituted with social need in personal wholeness. It is concerned with interpersonal outlet more than sexual outlet. When God made that interpersonal outlet, he made woman and thus provided for the most intimate form of the more general need. Paul is speaking of marriage *per se*.
 3. Genesis 2 is talking about what provides for the procreation of the race; Paul is concerned about the preservation of the church. (?)
 4. In Genesis God was speaking of the way human life as such was set up to be. As such it becomes a generality statement whereas Paul was speaking about exceptional matters either because of (a) the present distress associated with Christianity or (b) exceptional cases where marriage could keep a person from more easily fulfilling the goals of ministry. Paul does say, "Let every man and woman have their own spouse"; so he recognizes the same generality that Genesis 2 addresses.
 5. The translation in 1 Corinthians could be "good" in the sense of all right or okay. You do not have to get married to be a legitimate, full-fledged person. There is nothing wrong with being single. It may be less ideal to be single given human nature, but it is still good, particularly under the current conditions. Genesis was speaking about the typical situation because it was dealing with God's setting up the system originally.
 6. Paul has eternity in view (*"the fashion of this world is passing away"*); Genesis is talking about this life.
 7. Paul may be contrasting the Christian view of marriage with that of contemporary Judaism, which stressed marriage as something necessary for making someone complete. It was also part of the Near Eastern concern for progeny.
 8. The apostle probably means good in contrast to another good rather than in contrast to bad—it is good not in contrast but as an alternative. Both marriage and the single life are good theologically. Later in the chapter, he says a person should remain in whatever state he was in when he was converted. As far as Christianity is concerned, such states of social existence are immaterial to goodness. The single state that he urges is superior pragmatically because of present distress and ministry needs.
- 1 Corinthians 7 could be read with an emphasis on is, so as to imply that Paul is guardedly agreeing with a statement made in the Corinthians' earlier letter to Paul that may have said, *"Isn't it good not to marry?"* Such a comment could have been prompted by more Gnostic-oriented people in the church or from those opponents of the ones who were forwarding the question to Paul. If this is the scenario, Paul's point sounds rather like Jesus' answer to the disciples in Matthew 19 when they propose that it would be better not to get married if you could not get out of a bad marriage.

If Paul's lead sentence in 1 Corinthians 7 is responding to a context that was advocating celibacy, his comment would be a qualified confirmation of the goodness of such a viewpoint. The important qualification, however, is that celibacy is not to be advocated as a doctrine—as asceticism does—but as a practical measure for ministry and life in hard situations.

Genesis 6:6: *"It repented God that he had made man"* (cp. 1 Samuel 5:11).

BUT

Numbers 23:19 says, *"God is not man that he should repent."*

Genesis 22:1: God proved Abraham in telling him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

BUT

God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13).

Exodus 20:21: *"Moses approached the thick darkness where God was."*

BUT

1 Timothy 6:15-16 says, *"God . . . who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see."*

Conflicting figures on the same referent do not give conflicting messages about that referent.

Leviticus 18:11; 20:21 forbids a man to marry his brother's wife.

BUT

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 provides for levirate marriage, which calls for a man to marry his brother's widow to raise up heirs for his brother.

1 Kings 14:8; 15:5 says that David did only what was right in God's eyes.

BUT

David's significant sins are well-known—with Bathsheba, the numbering of the people, *etc.*

1. The statements about his doing only what was right are generalities in the form of absolutes.
2. As to final effect, he did only what was right. The bad that he did he repented of (2 Samuel 2:13; 22:20-25; 24:10) and was punished for. This would be a case of effective proleptic viewpoint, in which matters are viewed in terms of the end result *vs.* as they are at some point along the way leading up to the final condition. "All's well that ends well." The 1 Kings 14:8 statement takes into consideration the change that occurred via repentance afterward.
3. A relative statement given the general moral degradation of the day. In comparison to the kings who descended from him, David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He never departed his commitment to Yahveh alone as God.
4. The generality is within an implied limitation/frame of reference: the subject is Yahwism *vs.* polytheism. It is a matter of covenant keeping with Yahveh *vs.*

other gods. The law of contrast deals with Yahwism *vs.* not serving Yahveh exclusively. David never wavered in the direction of polytheism.

5. The frame of reference is David's role as king, not necessarily all areas of life. It is the effects on the nation more than the individual that are at issue.
6. The stress in reading should fall on me, mine (God's) eyes. He was regarded by God as doing only what was right.
7. The stress here is also on the heart as distinguished from specific behaviors that sometimes contradicted his heart.
8. The text says "to do" as if it were his purpose (rather than his success).
9. Similar verdicts are appended as the prophetic comments at the ends of several kings' reigns.

2 Chronicles 36:15; Jeremiah 7:25; 11:7; 25:3; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:15; 35:15; 44:4 (cp. Job 1:5) say that God gets up early and does such and such.

BUT

Psalm 121:4 says, "[Yahveh] that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

"Rising up early" is figurative; it is an anthropomorphism. It means that God is on top of things; he is not negligent or disinterested. Since getting up early is something people do when they are concerned, responsible, *etc.*, the image is used of God to show his responsibility, even though the specific manner of expressing it is foreign to him. Conflicting figures do not communicate conflicting ideas.

Arising early may not be so much getting up out of bed early as it is arising and doing something as in the expression "arise and go." It signifies making initial effort to accomplish something.

Psalm 2:4: "*The Lord will have them in derision*" (cp. Psalm 59:8).

BUT

Proverbs 24:17 says, "*Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he is overthrown.*"

1. The Psalms passages and others of similar sentiment are probably cases of anthropopathic statement—describing God with the typical feelings people have.
2. The language may not have to include the jeering, sneering attitude that could be part of the meaning of the words.

Psalm 16:10

Psalm 51:5: "*In sin my mother conceived me.*" How many ways can the comment be taken?

1. It is an instance of exaggeration for emphasis. Psalm 58:3 says that babies go forth from the womb, speaking lies. The latter passage in Psalms must be talking about active sin, not racial sin, because babies cannot do that. He was born in the context of sin and picked it up from his environment. "In" is environmental.

2. It is phenomenological language. That is the way David felt about the situation after his affair with Bathsheba. He was altogether saturated with sinfulness from as far back as he could remember, and this last incident was just another proof of it.
3. It is a case of the “moralizing view of history.” It was as if his parents had sinned and passed the consequences on to him. This is the way the expression is picked up by the Pharisees in John 9:34 when they say to the man born blind, “*You were altogether born in sin and you are trying to teach us?*”
4. It is a statement of natural depravity. “In” is natural. The verse expresses the concept of original sin. “*My nature biologically speaking has been fallen* (as an original condition resulting from Adam’s sin in the beginning of the race.)” A genetic connection with David’s present behavior and condition does not sound likely. If he was unregenerate at birth, surely he was not at the time of the Bathsheba incident. Why would he then appeal to a past condition at this point in his life? If he were not regenerate now, does this appeal to his birth amount to an explanation or justification? But that would not fit with his remorse. Finally, David is discussing himself, not necessarily everybody.
5. He was born with a nature capable of sinning rather than held sinful or incapable of not sinning (predisposed genetically to sinning).
6. David was born as the result of fornication. “In” is active; his mother sinned in conceiving him. The trouble with this solution is that David brings up the statement in connection with his own sin. Besides, this idea is not true to known facts.
7. It is a case of exchanging functional for ontological terms. *Nature* is an ontic term used for a behavioral description.
8. It is a statement about David’s legal state. He was born in the category of sin (original guilt). How relevant, though, would such an observation be to the circumstance out of which David composed the Psalm?
9. “Born in” is an idiom. It is an expression for totally characterized by. It puts ultimate origin for total degree, as with the English expression “born liar.” The passages with similar expressions are Genesis 8:21; Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17 (cp. Numbers 6:1-21); Job 4:4? 10:18-19; 11:11-12; 15:10, 14-16; 25:4; 31:15, 18; Psalm 58:3; Isaiah 44:2; 44:24; 46:3-4; 49:1, 5 (Isaiah 48:8, “rebel from birth,” said of Israel) Jeremiah 1:5 (cp. Galatians 1:15); Matthew 19:12; Luke 1:15; John 9:34; Acts 2:8; 3:2; 14:8; Romans 9:11 (< Genesis 25:23; Malachi 1:2-3); 2 Timothy 3:15.

Psalm 90:2, etc. “*From everlasting to everlasting Yahveh is God.*”

BUT

How can Jesus then be deity and be “*the beginning and the end*” (Revelation 21:6)?

1. Revelation offers a case of speaking loosely in figurative language. Jesus is there all the way back to the beginning on one “end” and all the way to the “end” in the other direction. To say that he covers a beginning (as in John 1:1;

Genesis 1:1) to an end does not have to be taken in a restrictive sense so as to imply that he had a beginning and end.

2. The phrases “*Alpha and Omega*,” “*the beginning and the end*” are evidently equivalent to the immediately adjacent phrase “*the one who was and is and is to come*”; hence, not contradictory.
3. The Greek alphabet begins and ends with these letters, but the real point would be that Jesus covers the whole range of whatever there is to cover just as “*Alpha and Omega*” covers the whole Greek alphabet. Jesus begins and ends everything else; he is the all-mighty (1:8d); it is not so much that he begins at some point, but that he is there at the beginning and end of other things (John 1:1; Genesis 1:1).
4. The phrase “*alpha and omega*” applies also to the Father on the throne (Revelation 21:6; 22:13).
5. The beginning and end of what? Creation or time or all of whatever there is.

Psalm 119:60: “*Every one of God’s righteous ordinances endures forever.*”

BUT

Colossians 2:14 teaches that with Christ God nailed the Law to the cross.

1. Psalm 119:60 is a universal statement within an implied limitation.
2. Colossians is not a statement about the cancellation of a covenant code, but a statement of cancellation of the Old Covenant as a basis for relationship with God. The code is still over us.
3. “Righteous ordinances” refers to fundamental principles while the Law in Colossians refers to specific situation expressions and applications of them. The former are permanent, but the latter are situational and temporary. Situational matters could include civil and ceremonial items that were contingent on the national circumstances in Israel.
4. There is a difference between the ordinances themselves and our having to succeed in keeping them.
5. Law *vs.* gospel is not a change of code but a change in the manner of having it. The law says the principles of behavior in a legal context. Law *vs.* gospel, then, is the form, mode, or quality of that value.
6. Nailing the law to the cross does not equal abolishing values and principles. It means taking away the legal encoding of them as a basis for salvation and relationship to God. The law is removed as a basis for relationship to God, but its principles are not removed as standards of conduct.
7. Psalm 119 is a generality statement, whereas Colossians 2:14, *etc.*, takes exceptions into consideration (note progressive revelation). Progressive revelation could involve even the moral elements of the law; God could raise the standard as development proceeded.
8. The Psalm may be speaking about ordinances that deal with righteousness, that is, moral expectancies.

Proverbs 20:1: “*Wine is a mocker.*”

1. It makes a fool out of you in the eyes of other people.
2. Wine promises great fun and then leads you into bad consequences (poverty, disease, addiction, broken relationships). So to speak, it stands back then and mocks you.
3. Wine turns the person himself into a mocker of other people, of God, of serious matters.

Proverbs 26:4: *“Answer a fool according to his folly.”*

BUT

“Don’t answer a fool according to his folly.”

The fear in the first case is *“lest you be like him.”* The fear in the second case is *“lest he be wise in his own eyes.”*

Time and circumstance determine which course of action to take with a fool. There might be a difference in how you deal with one fool as distinguished from another. A proud person does not “deserve an answer.” Some people may *“scorn the wisdom of your words”* (Proverbs 23:9). Sometimes it is wise to let things slide; later in private you might have more luck. Silence can sometimes do more good than speaking up. You do not want to stoop to the level of a fool by acting like him, but at the same time you do not want to let him think, or cause other people to think, that he has gotten the upper hand.

The difference may be in the expression “according to.” In the first instance, it may mean “the same way a fool talks,” which would make you as bad as him. In the second instance it might mean that you answer him in jest so as to shut him up lest in an effort to use sense with him he would feel that he had stumped you because his foolishness may take a good bit of reasoning and therefore a good amount of time. That kind of procedure makes him look big and makes you look small. That is a bit like casting pearls before swine.

In some circumstances you cannot just let the fool be. You must correct him in front of others lest he mislead them if they respect him too much. The folly of a fool needs to be brought to light.

Proverbs 26:17: *“He that passes by and vexes himself with strife belonging not to him is like one that takes a dog by his ears.”*

BUT

There is an opposite point earlier.

Ecclesiastes 1:9: *“There is nothing new under the sun.”*

BUT

“Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

Isaiah 7: Ahab would not try God and was condemned for it (cp. Malachi, *“Try me and see.”*).

BUT

“Why do you make trial of me, you hypocrites?” (Matthew 22:18); hence, it is a bad thing to do.

Jeremiah 7:21-22-26: *“I did not speak to your fathers or command them when I brought them out of Egypt concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.”*

BUT

Leviticus 1:3ff., etc., command sacrifices. [see Critical Old Testament essays]

Ezekiel 23:1-4: God is pictured as marrying sisters, who were Egyptian prostitutes.

Does this justify polygamy or prostitution?

Jonah vs. Ezra-Nehemiah on God’s attitude toward the heathen.

Micah vs. Isaiah on national policy in Judah.

Matthew 5:14-16: *“Let your light shine before men so they may see your good works and glorify God.”*

BUT

“Do not do your alms before people to be seen by them” (Matthew 6:1).

The point in the second text is giving alms “to be seen by men.” The motive is the problem as shown by the manner of doing the almsgiving.

Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:34-35: *“Give to him that asks from you.”*

BUT

Romans 13:8 says not to owe anybody anything.

“Do not owe anybody anything” assumes that you have the resources for paying or repaying what you owe. Paul is talking about meeting financial obligations. He is concerned about being willing to (re)pay what you owe; Jesus is concerned about being willing to lend what others need. Jesus is speaking of giving, not lending. The perspective of Romans 13:8 is perhaps to be understood as wisdom rather than commandment.

Matthew 5:48: *“Be perfect.”*

BUT

“There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10 < Psalm 14:1-13; 140:1-3; Romans 3:23; Philippians 3:12).

1. Jesus’ command is directional rather than positional, which amounts to aspiration rather than achievement.
2. In the eyes of the beholder vs. in fact is not pertinent since this is a command rather than a promise.
3. Degree vs. absolute usage of a term. Any word that refers to a quality may be used in the sense of high degree vs. absolute degree. For this reason, it does not do much good to translate τέλειω here “mature” rather than “perfect.” The problem of absolute degree of maturity still remains since it is relative to the

Father in heaven. Besides, the standard is in fact perfection; and if so, it should be commanded. A commandment always addresses the ideals we are to espouse, which is a different thing from the level we may achieve. Like all absolute terms, “perfect” is often used as a relative term meaning perfect for all practical purposes. The person who controls his tongue, James says, is a perfect man (3:2).

4. Matthew 5:48 may contain a conative present. (cp. “Greek Helps in Interpretation.”) This is a tendential command that in effect means, “Set perfection as your goal.” This approach would not be particularly applicable in descriptions of people as in fact perfect; it would apply only to cases where verbs are involved.
5. Perfect like God perhaps could be meant in contrast to Pharisees’ righteousness, which a person was to exceed.
6. Another approach people sometimes use is to say we are perfect because we are viewed as perfect. God forgives us; that is the reason we are perfect. The solution is weaker than some of the others because the verse gives a command; so it refers to an objective characteristic in the person.

Matthew 6:13: *“Do not lead us into temptation.”*

BUT

God does not tempt anybody (James 1:13).

“Lead us not into temptation” must be understood in a permissive sense: *“Don’t let us get led into temptation,”* or *“Don’t let us get led into temptations we can’t handle”* (1 Corinthians 10:13). Many experiences are combinations of good and bad. Others are not in themselves good or bad till their impact on us is seen in our reaction to them.

Matthew 8:5-13 vs. Luke 7:2-10. Did the centurion come to Jesus or not?

1. Is direct put for indirect? Pilate flogged Jesus (Matthew 27:26; Luke 23:16)! Streamlining causal distinctions is particularly characteristic of Hebrew expression. Matthew offers a more condensed version; so it is easier to suppose he is streamlining than to suppose Luke is creating details. The servant was an extension of the centurion. The centurion probably felt unworthy to ask Jesus directly in the same way he felt unworthy to have Jesus in his home. Even today far-eastern practice characteristically operates through an intermediary. In a way, Luke’s account is more “accurate” than Matthew’s report because it is more detailed, but that does not affect the intended point of the accounts.
2. Are the two events in sequence? The centurion sends first and goes later. It would be like Jacob sending his servants and wives on ahead before he himself came to meet Esau.
3. Are these the same accounts?

Matthew 10:29: *“Not a sparrow falls from the sky without the heavenly Father.”*

BUT

Paul asks the rhetorical question, “*Does God care about oxen?*” The implication is, “*No.*”

1. Deuteronomy 25:4 is admittedly in a curious setting. The context deals with the way humans should treat each other. Maybe Paul inferred from its setting that the regulation about oxen was intended primarily to say something about the attitude toward humans; this practice in Jewish society was perhaps intended to serve as a common, everyday reminder of a principle. Labor should benefit the needs of the laborer.
2. A relative truth is cast in an absolute form. This approach fits with the previous supposition that Paul means “Is God expressing concern for oxen in this regulation as much as he is for men?” or “Is God expressing concern just for oxen in this regulation?”
3. Muzzling the ox would not hurt the ox. At other times it could be fed everything it needed. This regulation would not then be expressing concern for animals. If the point is not for animals, it must be for people.
4. It has been said that people get more work out of an ox if they let it eat some of the grain as he goes along. 1 Timothy 5:18 combines reference to Deuteronomy 25:4 and Jesus’ principle, “*The laborer is worthy of his hire*” (cp. Deuteronomy 25:15).
5. In one case he is talking about the providential care of his disciples (more so than the birds); the other case is about the rights of the apostles to be supported for spiritual services rendered.

Matthew 10:34: “*Don’t think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword,*” Jesus said (= Luke 12:51).

BUT

“*The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace,*” Paul says (Gal. 5:22). Elsewhere Jesus himself said, “*I spoke these things that you might have peace*” John 16:33; cp. 14:27).

1. The peace may be a generality vs. a uniformity. Peace does not come uniformly, exclusively, or at all costs, although it is usually the case. Peace is the “tendency” of living by a transcendent reference.
2. There are different kinds of peace the speakers have in mind. There is a (a) psychological “peace of mind” and a (b) military peace, as from a political Messiah that redeems Israel from his enemies. Jesus did not come to bring political peace by overthrowing Rome and giving Israel political freedom. In fact, what he came to bring—peace with God—would eventually erupt in political instability and the loss of the Jewish state altogether. There is peace and strife at different levels. Peace may be disrupted at the physical level while it increases at the psychological level.
3. There may be a difference in who the peace is between and who it is for. There is (a) “peace with God” and with the Christian community, which is more important because it is from more “significant others.” The lack of peace

is between the Christian community and (b) those outside the believing community, who reject its message and who themselves do not belong to God. By conversion a person may become peaceful and peace-loving in contrast to his previous competing and combative behavior. That kind of change may be inferred in regard to James and John, who were nicknamed by Jesus “Sons of Thunder.” But later John stresses love in his writings and his analysis of Jesus’ person.

This may be a question of who is contributing the peace or the sword. (a) Other people may react unpeacefully to our commitments to Christ, but (b) we are peaceful persons when we become Christians because “*as much as lies in you, live peacefully with all people*” (Romans 12:18). We are supposed to be peacemakers, and we will be if we are living from a transcendent frame of reference. Inner peace is a guarantee, but outer peace does not always come.

4. Peace and conflict may be in sequence. Jesus brings conflict because of the rejection of his message by some, after which a greater peace comes than would have come without the message that initially provoked disharmony. In a way, the sword may bring about peace if the show of strength is by those whose motive is to bring peace. This concept, though true, is probably aside from the features of this situation.
5. A purpose-result distinction may apply. The result of preaching the gospel is often hostility when the purpose is peace.
6. Jesus’ comment may involve a relative negative: “*I did not come so much to bring peace as a sword.*” This approach yields the opposite emphasis, however, from what a person would expect to be his point.
7. There may be irony involved in Luke 12:51.

Matthew 18:10-14: We are supposed to become like little children.

BUT

Paul urges the Corinthians to put away childlike things (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Matthew 19:28: Jesus said to his original twelve apostles, “*You will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*” Since Judas was one of the twelve at the time, does this prediction imply, not only that he is saved in the end, but that he will take part in the leadership of the heavenly stage of the kingdom of God? Where would Matthias be in such an arrangement? Is Jesus talking about the “set” of apostles more than about the somewhat changing membership in the set.

Matthew 20:20-23: The mother of James and John asks Jesus to install her two sons on his left hand and right hand in the kingdom.

BUT

Mark’s account says that James and John come to Jesus with this request (10:35).

1. All three approached Jesus together, but the mother did the speaking. The advantage of this suggestion is that Matthew says she came with her sons.
2. The mother came first as an “ice breaker,” and the sons came afterwards in sequence. Another sequence possibility was that they came and did not get the

results they wanted, and the mother approached later to see whether she could do any better with Jesus.

3. Eastern custom was to operate through a spokesman/intermediary. They sent their mother because then neither James nor John would have to ask for the preferred right hand and offend the other brother. What a person does through another he does himself. Bathsheba approached David about her son Solomon (1 Kings 1:55ff.); later she approached Solomon (1 Kings 2:13-25). James and John ask at her behest (she was Jesus' aunt), or she asks at their behest.
4. Rather than custom, perhaps this is a literary device on Mark's part, a streamlining of causal distinctions. Indirect action can be reported in direct form.

Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 raise questions about the comparable event recorded in John 12:1-8 and another one in Luke 7:36-50.

Matthew-Mark do not name the woman; John is talking about Mary.

Matthew-Mark say that the woman anointed Jesus' head, while John says his feet. Matthew-Mark put the event during the final week; John puts it before the triumphal entry.

In Matthew-Mark the disciples (Matthew) and those present (Mark) object; Judas objects in John 12..

All three locate the occasion in Bethany; Matthew-Mark add the house of "Simon the leper."

The part about wiping his feet with her hair (John) is comparable to what happened with a sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee up in Galilee. The Galilee event has her anointing Jesus' feet with tears and ointment. It looks like there were two events, one in Galilee and another in Bethany with Matthew equaling Mark, on the one hand, and Luke and John sharing various details with each other and with Matthew-Mark's record. It is like a triangle formed by Matthew-Mark, Luke, and John.

Matthew 26:34 + 74-75; Mark 14:30 + 68, 72; Luke 22:34 + 61; John 13:38 + 18:27 present a difficulty about Peter's three denials of Christ in comparison to a rooster's crowing.

1. Matthew 26:34: "*Tonight before (a) rooster's crowing [φωνῆσαι] you-will-deny me three-times*" [cp. 26:74: "*immediately (a) rooster crowed*"].
2. Mark 14:30: "*Today this night before (a) rooster's crowing [φωνῆσαι, phōnēsai], twice/a-second-time you will deny me three times.*"
3. Luke 22:34: "*(A) rooster will not crow [φωνῆσει] today until you deny three-times (that) you know me.*" "*And turning, the Lord fixed-his-eyes-on Peter and Peter remembered the Lord's word when he told him, 'Before a rooster crows [φωνῆσαι, phōnēsai] today you will deny me'*" (22:61). Note also 22:60: "*Immediately while he was yet talking, (a) rooster crowed.*"

4. John 13:38: “(A) rooster will surely not crow until you deny me three-times.”
Note also 18:27: “Immediately (a) rooster crowed.”

- a. Δίς equals second cock-crowing—at dawn—in contrast to a midnight or previous evening’s cock crow. The previous evening would be part of the same day in Jewish reckoning. Mark is simply more precise. Not likely, since in the fulfillment account Mark notes the first and the second crowing (14:68-72).
- b. Δίς equals double cock-crowing, one right after another. This suggestion is not likely because Mark’s narrative separates the first two crowings.
- c. Mark speaks more precisely while the others speak more loosely. Mark was associated with Peter, who would recall the event more precisely. Crowing refers to the general phenomenon of rooster crowing in the morning *vs.* a specific cock crow. But actually, as per Mark, the general crowing had already begun.

Matthew and Luke, being more general in their presentation, end up letting “rooster crowing” refer to the event, which then amounts to dawn: “*Before dawn you will deny me three times.*” Mark, by being more detailed, had rooster crowing refer to the individual crowings. Obviously, Mark’s more detailed narrative, as far as the rooster crowing goes, has to be the way it really happened. Luke and Matthew are therefore less accurate, but their accounts are still accurate. In keeping with this idea, some commentators have said that “rooster crowing” becomes the label for one of the watches of the night. Under this reconstruction, Matthew and Luke make “rooster crow: into something of a technical term.

Perhaps the force could be, “*Rooster crowing will not get into full swing by the time you deny me three times*” (Matthew, Mark, Luke); *vs.* Mark, who is more precise. We are still left with what Jesus actually said.

- d. There is some manuscript variance here: (a) δις ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι
(b) ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι δις
(c) ἀλέκτορα δις φωνῆσαι

The textual problem “and the rooster crowed” could be an add-in inferred from 14:72. The original prediction could have said “twice.”

- e. Matthew, Luke, and John have the second crowing in mind because it is the one Peter notices consciously; cp. two *vs.* one angel at the post-resurrection scene, beggars in Jericho, and demoniacs in Gadara.
- f. There may be differences in the use of the word “crowing”: crowing could refer to a time period, before a twelve-to-three a.m. cock-crowing time is over, while crowing twice is a more specific statement meaning early in the cock crowing time.
- g. All three denials cannot precede the first crowing (Mark 14:68 + 71-72).
- h. It could be that the second crowing was the most important one and that is the one referred to by Matthew and Luke. It would be the one that Peter noticed. Mark makes the note about the rooster crowing after Peter’s first denial, but Peter does not seem to make the connection; he goes ahead with his denials

twice again. When the rooster crowed again, Peter woke up to the fact that the rooster crowed, and he remembered his Lord's prediction and then he remembered that the rooster had crowed before as well. This approach is on the analogy of the incidents with two-vs.-one angels, beggars, demoniacs elsewhere in the gospels. Furthermore, it is the second crowing that in Mark's account catches Peter's attention; so it may have been the one Matthew and Luke would have in mind in a more general statement. This approach also means that "rooster crows" is not a one-time thing as if to say before the rooster begins to crow.

- i. Rooster crows could be thought of as ongoing action so as to mean before cock-crowing time. The rooster will not be crowing before you deny me three times.
- j. If Peter denied Jesus before the rooster crowed, he denied him before the rooster crowed twice. But the question remains as to why Jesus said "twice."
- k. *"Before the cock crows"* in Matthew and Luke would refer to the time when Peter consciously noted it, which was in fact the second time the rooster crowed, but only after the second crowing did Peter remember the first time it crowed. Mark intersperses the crowing and denials.
- l. *"Before the rooster crows"* could mean before the rooster finishes crowing.
- m. The translation should probably be *"before a rooster crows."* *This case is probably a case of a noun typical of its class, which in modern English uses a instead of the.*

So the problem is fourfold: manuscript difference, use-of-terms problem (general "crow" equal a set of crowing vs. specific crowings), whether Jesus' words are verbatim, and a translation difference.

Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26 say that Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' cross.

BUT

John 19:17 says that Jesus carried his own cross.

Jesus carried his cross part of the way. Matthew 27:31 indicates that the soldiers led him away from where they were privately mocking him. Mark and Luke indicate that when they conscripted Simon to carry the cross, Simon was coming in from the country. The implication is that Jesus carried the cross from the governor's quarters to somewhere near the place where the procession was going out of the city gate.

Matthew 27:34 says that the wine and gall was a mixture.

BUT

John 19:30 says that Jesus received vinegar.

Matthew 27:34 indicates that on the cross Jesus refused the wine mixed with gall.

BUT

Paul tells Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake.

Matthew 28:2-6 says that one angel appeared to the women as they came to the tomb of Jesus that morning.

BUT

Luke 24:2-7 and John 20:12 indicate that there were two angels in the sepulcher.

Note that where only one is mentioned, there is direct quotation, but where two are mentioned, it is indirect quotation.

Matthew 20:29-34 has two blind beggars while Mark 10:46-52 has one.

Matthew 8:28-34 has two Gadarene demoniacs; Mark 5:1-12; Luke 8:26-39 has one.

Matthew 21:2 has two donkeys while Luke 19:30 has one.

1. Only one is mentioned because the other was not prominent or perhaps because only the one angel spoke.
2. "One" does not contradict "two"; "only one" would contradict "two."

Matthew 28:18: If Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth, how does Paul have any? Furthermore, if Christ has all authority, how does the Father have any? Yet in 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10 (cp. 1 Corinthians 5:4) Paul talks about the authority that the Lord gave him for building them up rather than tearing them down. Hebrews 2:6-9 indicates that the Father is an exception to the all things that are subordinated to the Son.

Matthew 28:19: *"Go then and make disciples of all the nations"* (cp. Matthew 10:6).

BUT

Jesus said that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 15:24)

Matthew 28:19 talks about baptism *"in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit."*

BUT

In all other references to baptism the terminology is *"in the name of Jesus"* (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27).

1. The other cases could all be considered instances of synecdoche, and as such could be short-hand expressions.
2. The cases do not contradict, being found in scripture.
3. The rationale for the Jesus terminology is Jesus in contrast to John, especially in Acts 19:5. In most cases we can take *"baptized in the name of Jesus"* as a positive rather than contrastive statement.
4. Perhaps the Jesus terminology distinguishes between Christianity and Judaism. The emphasis in Christianity is distinctively on Jesus as the Messiah. Salvation is spoken of in terms of Christ; therefore, baptism, which connects with the salvation process, is spoken of in terms of Jesus. The New Testament speaks of baptism into Christ for the same reason that we call ourselves Christians.

5. If Jesus is one with the Father (John **10:30**; **17:21**), then our being identified with him amounts to being identified with the Father and Son. That is in fact the point of Jesus coming—that in identifying with him as priest, we identify with the Father. Baptizing in the name of Jesus represents the sense that Jesus is the one closest to us by way of incarnation, who connects us with the Father, who is more distant by being invisible.

Matthew **28:20** says that Jesus will be with his disciples to the end of the age.

BUT

2 Corinthians **5:6**, 8-9 teaches that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord (cp. Acts **18:10**).

1. The answer here lies in the difference in word meanings. Paul's being absent from the Corinthians "in body" nevertheless allowed him to be present with them "in spirit" (1 Corinthians **5:3**). His point in 2 Corinthians **5** is that Christ and we are not physically in each other's perceivable presence during this life; Jesus' point in Matthew **28** is that he is spiritually (interpersonally) with us while we are in this life. We are in each other's presence in thought and awareness, but not in perception (cp. 1 John **3:2**). He might be with us via omniscience, but we can only be with him via imagination.

No one has seen God at any time (John **1:18**) except during the incarnation. When Christ leaves the incarnation state, he is not present with us in a visible sense.

2. Jesus could mean that during the church age he is with his disciples by way of the Spirit--representatively.

Mark **5:19**: Jesus tells the Gadarene demoniac to go home and tell what great things the Lord had done for him. He sent out the twelve and the seventy to spread the news that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

BUT

Several times Jesus charges peoples not to tell what he had done for them or what they had seen: Mark **5:43** (the resurrection of Jairus' daughter); **7:36** (the healing of the deaf mute); **9:9** (the disciples after seeing the transfiguration). He repeatedly shut the demons up that he was exorcising because they knew who he was. He told his disciples in Matthew **16:20** not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

1. Was this reverse psychology so the effect would be even greater?
2. Not allowing his disciples to tell anyone that he was the Messiah was in part because the enthusiasm for political Messianism was at fever pitch. Stirring that misguided zeal would be counterproductive, even disastrous.
3. Jesus first had to instruct his disciples and others about the real mission of the Messiah, before he made too much of the fact that he was the Messiah. The immediate group of twelve followers shared the popular conviction that the Messiah was a political and military figure; so they would probably send the wrong message.

4. Jesus did not want demons testifying for him; the people might just “consider the source” and make the wrong inferences. He was already having to fight the Pharisees caricature of his exorcisms as something he did by the power of Beelzebub (Matthew **10:25; 12:24, 27**).
5. He is charging the ones he healed not to circulate the report in order to lessen the misdirection of his ministry. His compassion for the needs of the multitudes was real, but it was not the central or distinctive focus of his mission. If he spurred interest in his healing work too much, the crowds could become so overwhelming that he could not even function (Mark **6:1**), much less devote the proper time and energy to teaching and preparing the masses for the real nature and purpose of the Messianic kingdom.
6. There were times and places in Jesus’ ministry when the popularity was so intense that he could not accommodate the huge crowds that were assembled. Fanning misperceived Messianism would have been counterproductive.

Mark **6:6** says that Jesus could not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief (cp. Matthew **13:58**)

BUT

Luke **22:51** records the fact that in the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of his arrest Jesus healed Malchus’ ear after Peter cut it off with his sword. Malchus was one of those who was taking part in the arrest of Jesus; surely he was not a believer.

1. Jesus healed Malchus to teach the disciples a lesson about the kingdom more than to engender or enhance Malchus’ faith. Engendering and enhancing faith had always previously been the design of Jesus’ miracles. Being a teaching miracle, it “righted a wrong” in the sense that Peter had sent Jesus’ captors the wrong message. It would not necessarily have been wrong for Jesus to defend himself, but under the circumstances he could not do that without communicating the wrong thing about the kingdom he came to establish; it “*was not of this world*” (John **18:36**). Jesus probably had the disciples bring a sword to Gethsemane in anticipation of this very kind of scene. He could then most graphically teach them as well as his captors that his kingdom was not national, political, or militaristic. It was not the type that could further its purposes by force.
2. The point of this comparison has to do with the nature of the necessity for faith on the part of the recipient of miraculous manifestation. Jesus could not do the mighty works in Nazareth because there was no point, given the principle of doing them to engender or enhance faith in his claims. The Mark statement may relate more to a lack of healing because not many were willing to come to him for healing. They considered him the same old carpenter he had always been, someone that was now trying to make himself something more than what he really was.
3. Jesus did nature miracles, whose value lies along the very line of concern here because the effect could not have depended on the faith of the recipient. Nature miracles could not be psychosomatically produced and so the effect

could not depend on the thing affected. The resurrection of Lazarus, the widow of Nain's son, and Jairus' daughter; walking on the water, stilling the storm, predicting the future, cursing the fig tree had the same import.

4. As a rule, Jesus chose not to heal under conditions when others were taking the initiative rather than he, as in Luke 22:51. He could not heal in Nazareth because of inconsistency with that principle. Note the difference between naturally unable, circumstantially unable, and principle-wise unable and at the same time maintain consistency.
5. He did perform miracles in Nazareth; he just did not do very many. The inference is not that success depends on the faith of the receiver, or that failure implies a lack in the recipient's faith, or that he could not do it without the recipient's faith. His power to heal was not limited by people; his use of that power was limited by principle—by people's unwillingness or lack of faith.
6. On the other side of the coin, Paul was not healed even though he had faith (but this was an answered-prayer case rather than a miracle case).

Luke 6:26 warns us to beware when all men speak well of us.

BUT

Acts 2:47 says that the first Christians had favor with all the people; 5:13 says the people magnified them.

How can both of these comments be true? These cases of good report with "all the people," however, did not involve "everybody." Jesus evidently means that a person is not standing for his values if he is never objectionable to anyone. The Lord was trying to offset the urge we all have for everyone to like us. If we carry that urge too far, we have to compromise our principles to gain people's favor.

Luke 9:50: "*He that is not against is for us.*"

BUT

Luke 11:23 says, "*He that is not for us is against us.*"

1. Both passages mean to say first that there is no such thing as pure neutrality.
2. Not being positively committed works against Christ in what he could do through you. Not working against Christ allows him to do what he is trying to do.
3. The first case deals with spreading the gospel about him; the second deals with following him and doing his will.
4. According to 9:50 if you find someone doing God's work, assume he is on your side. This is general while the other is specific.
5. Part of Jesus' agenda was to avoid cliquishness on the part of the twelve. Jesus had other disciples than those who could follow him all over the country. The ones he had called to do that should not try to discredit the confirmatory work of other people whose sympathies were right. Jesus was telling the twelve not to worry about those who are trying to enhance Jesus' credibility, but to worry about those who are trying to discredit him.

Luke 10:17: *“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

BUT

Judas as one of the twelve was presumably part of the seventy, and Judas was the son of perdition (John 17:12).

1. There is a time difference. At this stage of things Judas may not have been in a lost condition before God. Names can be removed from the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).
2. A general statement does not equal an absolute one.

Luke 14:26: Jesus said that no one could be his disciple unless he hated father, mother, sister, brother, and even his own life.

BUT

Paul says that nobody ever hated his own flesh (Ephesians 5:29); Colossians 3:19 tells husbands to love their wives.

1. The language is based on a binary way of handling what in reality is more nearly threefold—positive vs. negative is used for a positive, neutral, and negative matter. Love one and hate the other is idiomatic for love one more than the other. In some circumstances it may turn out to mean loving one so much that the others are hated by comparison. This approach is comparable to hyperbole and lies behind the general idiom called “relative negative.”
2. “Hate” has a wider range of meaning that includes “dislike” as well as outright “hate.” *“I loved Jacob and hated Esau.”* Deuteronomy 2:4-6 commanded the Israelites to pay the Edomites for passing through their land. God later protected Edom from Israel when they went in to take the land of Canaan.

Luke 18:19: *“Why do you call me ‘good’? Only one is good—God.”*

Is Jesus claiming that he is not good or that he is not God?

Do his words imply that all the angels have sinned rather than just the ones that followed Satan?

Luke 23:43: *“Today you will be with me in Paradise,”* Jesus says to the thief on the cross.

BUT

In John 20:17 the Lord says to Mary Magdalene, *“Don’t cling to me; I have not yet ascended to my father.”*

1. Jesus’ descent to Hades (the abode of the dead) may have occurred between his death and resurrection.
2. Being with Jesus in Paradise might be the kind of presence Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 5:3—present in spirit. Being in Paradise may mean a state of positive relationship, not a place (1 Peter 3:18-4:6). Jesus’ spirit was with the Father and the thief, but his body was still here “unascended.”

3. I have not yet ascended to the Father permanently or “for good.” She need not hang onto him as if he were about to leave straight from the tomb and go directly to heaven. There would be some time before his final departure.
4. An almost opposite implication is that she is going to have to let him go; he has not ascended yet, but he will in fact be leaving for heaven rather than continuing on earth. *“If you are clinging to me now, what are you going to do when I leave permanently?”*
5. Somewhat different still is the idea that he was getting ready to ascend to the Father temporarily yet that morning. Mary Magdalene was “holding him up.” He would come back later that day in other appearances to other disciples.
6. Could he be rebuking her for trying to hold onto someone who had been in heaven? Hence, he says that he hasn’t been there to remove her motive for hanging onto him.
7. Paradise is not where the Father is, or at least was not at the time. Paradise never names the Father’s dwelling place. Paradise is the same as Abraham’s bosom.
8. “Today” is general present. The day that Jesus and the thief would have together began before the comment and was long enough to be after the forty days and the ascension. “Today” equals forever, which had as good as begun already. *“As of today you will be with me in paradise.”*
9. Paradise is not a place of conscious existence; the thief on the cross would be with him even then, however. (?)
10. Another translation offered by those especially who believe in soul-sleeping is, *“I say to you today, ‘You will be with me in paradise’”* [rather than go to hell].

John 1:18: *“No man has seen God at any time”*; 6:46: *“No man has seen the Father except the one that is from God”* (Hebrews 11:27; 1 John 4:12; 6:16; cp. Colossians 1:15; 1 John 4:20).

BUT

Exodus 24:10-11 says that Nadab, Abihu, Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders of Israel saw God. Moses knew God face to face (Deuteronomy 34:10; Numbers 12:6-8; also Exodus 24:9-11).

1. Texts that talk about people seeing God include Genesis 12:7 (Abraham), 16:13 (Hagar); 26: 2, 24 (Isaac); Exodus 24:10 (Moses, Nadab, Abihu, Aaron, and the seventy elders of Israel), Judges 6:22-23 (Gideon); 13:22 (Manoah?); Isaiah 6:5 (Isaiah).
2. Is this the reason Stephen speaks of the “angel” in the bush (Acts 7:30)?
3. What is the contrast between “seeing his form” and “seeing him as he is” (1 John 3:2)? Does “seeing his form” equal manifestation? If so, how was Moses different from other prophets? Could “showed him his form” mean something like *“seeing the behind parts of his glory”*? What was the contrast between Moses’ experience and that of the others to whom God revealed himself in “visions”? Was is degree of clarity regarding concepts or perception of God’s person?

4. What is the contrast between seeing God, seeing the behind parts of God's glory, and seeing his face?
5. Does "face to face" mean simply more clearly, or does it mean more directly than a dream or vision? The contrast between Moses and other prophets could be a generalization rather than an absolute rule. God could be talking about the way he was operating with the contemporaries of Moses rather than with predecessors or successors. The point would be that at Moses' time, God was operating distinctively with him in contrast to other prophets among the people.
6. Seeing God in his own nature is not the same thing as God in manifested form (cp. 1 John 3:2: "*we will see him as he is.*").

John 3:13: "*No one has ascended to heaven except the one who descended out of heaven, the Son of man.*"

BUT

Enoch and Elijah ascended to heaven (Genesis 5:14; 2 Kings 2:11).

John 3:16: "*God so loved the world.*"

BUT

1 John 2:15 says not to love the world of the things of the world.

1. Does world mean all nations vs. the Jewish nation or all people vs. those already saved?
2. How the word world is used in the rest of the references in John is a factor in deciding how it is used here. In 16:8 occurs the phrase "*convict the world of sin.*"
3. The difference lies in the connotation of the word. World is used with negative connotation in 1 John 2, but in a positive sense in John 3. 1 John is concerned with the world in the sense of its moral outlook, behavior pattern, and value system; John 3 refers to the "people" of the world. The world in contrast to God differs from the world as to its intended nature.
4. The problem centers also on the meaning of the word "love." There is a love that changes the world; there is a love that changes a person into being like the world.

John 4:54: How can curing the nobleman's son (4:54) be the second sign and Cana the first sign (2:11) if Nicodemus says, "*No one can do these signs that you are doing . . .*" (3:2).

The text says that curing the nobleman's son was the second sign, Jesus having come out of Galilee.

John 5:22: "*The Father has given judgment to the Son*" and "*For judgment I came into the world*" (9:39; Acts 17:31).

BUT

“I judge no one” (John 8:15; cp. 3:17, which says that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn/judge it but to save it (see also 12:47-48). *“He that rejects me has one that judges him”* (John 12:48).

1. *“I judge no man”* goes on to say, *“but if I do, my judgment is true”* (John 8:15-16). The expanded comment shows something of the sense in which Jesus meant the earlier part of it.
2. One variable is the meaning of terms—whether κρίνω means evaluate or condemn in texts where Jesus says that he did or did not come to κρίνω the world.
3. Another variable relates to the possibility of relative negative. He did not primarily, initially, so much come the first time to condemn the world but to save it.
4. A related, third variable is between intent and consequence, purpose and result, primary and second motive. The primary purpose was to get people to change; but when they fail to change, condemnation comes because they should have changed. John 3 goes on to say that disbelievers are condemned already because of the disbelief.
5. A fourth variable is the time reference; the saving and judging operations are in sequence. One set of statements refers to the present time; the other looks forward to the final judgment when earthly life is finished. Afterwards, Jesus himself may serve as the Father’s legate in rendering judgment on those who refuse adequate opportunity to repent.

John 15:13: *“Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends.”*

BUT

“God commended his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners [i.e., enemies] Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

It would take greater love to lay down your life for your enemies than to lay it down for your friends.

John 17:4: How can Jesus say that he has finished (τελειώσας, *teleiōsās*) the work the Father sent him to do, and then say the next day, *“It is finished”* (τετέλεσται, *tetelestai*; John 19:30)? And how, in either case, can he say that it was finished, and Paul say that Jesus was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25)? Even later Paul says to the Colossians that he himself was filling up on his part what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

1. Paul’s point in Romans is not that he was delivered up for people’s trespasses one-to-one (i.e., but not resurrected for our trespasses) and that he was raised for our justification one-to-one (as if not delivered up for trespasses). This amounts to synonymous parallelism *for trespasses* and *justified* are equal expressions.
2. Another way to look at it is to say that there is a cluster of actions/deeds/events on the causal side and a cluster of consequences on the result side. The

two clusters as wholes are what correlate. But in poetic expression, parts in each circle are paired up directly. This happens in many cases of parallelism. To avoid misinterpretation, the reader must distinguish the form of statement from the reality stated (language form vs. content/meaning/ reality).

3. What Paul is filling up has a different value than the afflictions of Christ. Paul's sufferings come from efforts to deliver the news about Christ's sufferings and their value.
4. Not taking a substitutionary view of the atonement would help relieve the problem.
5. Maybe the point is that Jesus had "as good as" finished the work; tomorrow it would be over. Similarly, Paul says that he has run the race and finished the course, when as a matter of strict fact he is still alive with his martyrdom yet to face (2 Timothy 4:6-8).
6. The word *it* is ambiguous. On the cross "it" could mean the suffering/his physical life, specifically the crucifixion experience. In the high priestly prayer, it might be the living and teaching work he had to do for God.
7. The difference between the wee hours of the morning and the following mid-afternoon is negligible in comparison to the three and one-half years of ministry, in comparison to his thirty-three years of life, in comparison to eternity to date.
8. John 17 refers to the preparation of himself while John 19 refers to the offering of himself. His holy living was a preparation for his effective offering.

John 18:9: "*Of the ones you gave me I lost none*"; John 6:39 says that the Father willed that Jesus would lose none of those he had given him.

BUT

Judas was lost. John 17:12 adds "*except the son of perdition that the scriptures might be fulfilled.*"

1. John 6:39 shows that the general principle included willingness on the part of the ones kept. If the principle applies in the spiritual realm as it does in the physical, we should note that Judas committed suicide; otherwise, he too could have been kept from the Jews. He chose to forfeit life, and God does not protect a man from himself.
2. The 18:9 text refers to the fact that none of the disciples were captured by the enemies of Christ. Evidently the earlier statement was not about eternal salvation.

John 21:25: "*There are many other things that Jesus did, which if they would be written every one, the world itself would not have room for the books that should be written.*"

BUT

Acts 1:1 says, "*The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, about all things that Jesus began to do and to teach.*"

These two comments are in successive verses in the Bible.

Exaggeration for emphasis is a regular figure of speech in everyday language and in Bible usage as well. John's exaggeration lies in the space it would take for the written account; Luke's exaggeration is in the amount of material he incorporated into his narrative. Inasmuch as what Luke did include in his gospel was representative of other things, he had recorded all (kinds of) things in his previous account.

Acts 2:27 quotes Psalm 16 to the effect that the Holy One would not see corruption.

BUT

Jesus was in the tomb three days.

1. Peter would not have used the passage if what would have happened to the body in thirty-five hours contradicted the prophecy.
2. Peter sets it in contrast to what happened to the body of David; so "corruption" gets its meaning from what happened to David's body. That is what did not happen to Jesus' body. The psalmist himself contrasts the fate of the Holy One. Consequently, the psalmist and the apostle understood "not see corruption" to be the total disintegration of the Messiah's body.
3. Degree difference is the best mechanism to bring to bear on this situation in light of the contrast with what normally happens to dead bodies. The psalmist is speaking of that degree of disintegration characteristic of all those who died—total disintegration. The degree of deterioration in thirty-five hours would be negligible enough not to "count." It would still have been recognizable as a body, as in fact his body. The women were not aghast at the contemplation of entering his tomb and finishing the burial preparation. Besides, the time of year was evidently rather cool, especially in the evening and at least that year. The people in Caiaphas' court were warming themselves around a fire. Nearly half the time the body was in the tomb was evening; and it was in a tomb, which would have been cooler still. Had this been mid-summer, the deterioration would have been more rapid.
The countering consideration is that Lazarus had died earlier that same year, and Martha figured that by the fourth day the body would be stinking. Thirty-six hours is significantly different from at least sixty or seventy hours in the case of Lazarus.
4. Did the body resurrect immediately and go to heaven or paradise or did the resurrection delay until Sunday morning? A person could say that the tomb was opened, not to let him out, but to show that it was empty. Under this reconstruction the tomb was empty from the time the soldiers closed it until the angels opened it. Jesus may have been in the abode of the dead meantime—body and all (1 Peter 3-4). Other scriptures say, however, that he arose on the third day, which implies that his body lay in the tomb until it arose on Sunday morning.
5. Was Jesus' body miraculously preserved from decay?
6. Did the psalmist mean corruption permanently, that is, as a final condition?

Acts 2:38 answers the audience's question by saying, "*Repent and be baptized.*"

BUT

Acts 16:31 says to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Paul gives a more generalized response to the jailer because he had less background, if any, to know what salvation was. Perhaps all he knew was what he had heard (around town) or in the songs Paul and Silas had been singing!
2. Repentance and baptism (2:38) are aspects of belief (16:31). Baptism arises from faith and so is a derivative act. Faith in Christ includes several specifics—believing, repenting, and being baptized. Faith, as belief, could also involve synecdoche, where one aspect—belief—is put for the whole set of aspects. Belief could then be representative of the items of response. The Homestead Act involved a set of obligations before the land became owned. The land was to be improved, residence was to be established, papers were to be filed. The usual announcement, however, simply said "free land."
3. Peter is answering in light of where his hearers are. They already believed; so the remaining things are what Peter included in his response.

Acts 5:13 says that "*of the rest no one dared to join himself to them.*"

BUT

Acts 5:14 says that "*believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.*"

Acts 15:20, 29 tells the Gentile Christians to abstain from pollutions of idols and things sacrificed to idols.

BUT

In 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 agrees that there is nothing in principle wrong with eating such meat and deals with the thing from a testimony standpoint toward pagans and weaker brothers.

1. We need not think that the Acts 15 lists are homogeneous lists. Not all the items are moral matters just because fornication is a moral matter in the list. Wisdom matters could be included with moral matters.
2. The framers of the decree may have meant to forbid pollutions of idols by sympathetic involvement with shamle meat.

Acts 17:25 indicates that God is not served by men's hands as though he needed anything.

BUT

Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 14 says that God created us to the praise of his glory.

1. More exactly the Ephesian text says "*to the praise of the glory of his grace,*" which refers to something first given. Likewise Acts 17 says, "*. . . seeing that he is the giver of all things.*"

2. It is instructive to compare the nature of interpersonalism in human beings: we love to love and be loved not because we need it, but because we want it. Couples with double incomes and free lives will have a baby that restricts their movements, lowers their income, draws on their resources, and the like. They would not say they do it because they need children.
3. Part of the problem is with the meaning of the word need. On the Areopagus Paul was commenting in the restricted circumstance of sacrifice to the pagan gods. He may have had in mind only life-dependent needs.

Acts 27:10 says that Paul “perceived” that the voyage to Rome would be with much loss of “our lives.”

BUT

In 27:22 Paul predicts on the basis of an angel’s message that there would be no loss of life.

1. The earlier statement could indicate Paul’s perception of what would happen in normal circumstances trying to sail the Mediterranean Sea so late in the season. In this case he was wrong, but it does not tell against his predictive abilities because he was not making, strictly speaking, a prediction.
2. Could this situation be comparable to 1 Corinthians 7, where he distinguishes between what he has revelation about and what he does not, the difference being that in Act 27 he was wrong? Perhaps God could let him be wrong here because it was not a matter of speaking ex cathedra; that is, it was not a matter of speaking in his role as apostle.
3. The loss of life was conditional prophecy, which in this case did not take into consideration Paul’s later prayer for the life of those sailing with him: “God has granted you all the ones sailing with you,” that is, “granted” as a result of Paul’s unrecorded prayer for their safety.

Romans 3:20, 28-30 teaches that we are saved by faith, not by works (cp. Galatians 3:10-14; Ephesians 2:8-10).

BUT

Other texts say that we are judged by the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or bad (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12; cp. Ephesians 6:8; Job 34:11; Psalm 62:12)

Romans 8:8: *“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God”*

How many conceivable meanings could such a statement have?

1. As long as we are in the physical body we are displeasing to God.
2. “Flesh” stands for a way of life that is based on flesh, on physical considerations only. We cannot please God, who operates on a spiritual value system, as long as we are living by principles derived from the fleshly system; because the systems are incompatible as ultimate frames of reference.

3. The unregenerate man has no ability to do anything that pleases God. But, it is not an ability issue, but a circumstantial issue.

Romans 11:26 declares, *“And so all Israel will be saved.”*

BUT

“Though the people of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved” (Romans 9:27 < Isaiah 10:22-23).

1. All “spiritual Israel” will be saved; spiritual Israel is the true Israel, the “Israel of God.” There is a word-meaning switch between the two texts: national Israel in Isaiah 10 and spiritual Israel in Romans 11. Paul’s Israel in 11:26 equals Isaiah’s remnant. Spiritual Israel includes both Jews and Gentiles, but not all of either.
2. All Israel that is saved will be saved this way. Does οὕτως mean “in this manner” or “as an inference.” The point of contrast lies not at all but at Israel—all true Israel will be saved. The comment has to do with the way the salvation system operates—by faith. Note the preceding Olive Tree illustration. People whether Jews or Gentiles, are “Israel” in the interpersonal sense; they are sons of Abraham by faith (rather than by flesh) as Paul says elsewhere. Israel in 11:26 is the Olive Tree of 11:17-24, the “spiritual Israel, the remnant of Israel
People are in “Israel” by faith, not by flesh (circumcision, physical descent from Abraham) or by works (obedience to the Mosaic law). The people of God are considered identified with the historical person Abraham by faith, *i.e.*, by interpersonal considerations rather than by flesh or works.
3. All Israel is potential (*vs.* actual) all and is combined with οὕτως as manner, which means by faith (11:20).

Romans 14:13 encourages Christians not to judge each other anymore.

BUT

1 Peter 4:17 says that judgment must begin at the house of the Lord and that if we are barely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? Likewise, Paul urges the Corinthians to judge the incestuous man among them.

There is a difference between evaluating and condemning and criticizing. Matthew 7:1ff. and many other texts warn against the critical spirit.

1 Corinthians 1:17: *“God did not send me to baptize but to preach.”*

1. Paul’s statement represents a case of relative negative: *“God did not so much send me to baptize as to preach.”* This is a case of larger *vs.* smaller frame of reference. Paul was sent to preach, which would naturally include all the things that preaching involved—baptism too.
2. There is a difference in the meanings of “baptize.” In 1 Corinthians *baptize* means to perform baptisms whereas in the Great Commission it is the name of the act “baptism.” That is different from making it a negotiable item in the

Christian witness. John 4:1-2 is a helpful text for seeing the difference between the Great Commission (cp. John 4:1) and Paul's comment to the Corinthians (John 4:2). Paul is not talking about the value or importance of baptism, but the performer of baptism. He is not talking about whether baptism has a place in the redemption proclamation, but who performs it.

3. Many interpreters comment at this point that baptism is not associated with salvation, which is the goal of the Commission. It has another role relative to the gospel—church membership.
4. In adopting the practice he did, Paul was concerned that the Corinthians not associate the meaning of baptism with him as administrator in contrast to the Father, Son, Spirit.

1 Corinthians 11:24: *"This is my body which is broken for you"*

BUT

John 19:36 says that the soldiers did not break Jesus' bones, which fulfilled the Old Testament anticipation that not a bone of him would be broken.

1. To say that the body was broken is not necessarily to say its bones were broken. Jesus' body was "broken" by scourging and pierced with nails, thorns, and a spear.
2. Would minor bones in the feet be considered something that "counted" as broken bones? Would bones in effect mean the major bones typically broken to hasten the death of crucifixion victims? Jesus' bones were not broken in the sense that the other thieves' bones were broken. Consequently, it is not just a matter of whether bones were broken, but the kind of bone breaking that happened to the others.
3. There is a manuscript variant in 1 Corinthians 11. *Broken* is probably not the preferred reading: *Which is for you* or *which is given for you* are alternate readings.
4. There is a question about the antecedent for *which*. Is *bread* ("this") the antecedent of "broken" and "which," or is *body* the antecedent: broken bones, broken body, or broken bread.
5. Is the original psalm saying "not a bone" making a statement that in effect means he was not mauled?

1 Corinthians 3:11 says that there is no other foundation than Jesus Christ.

BUT

Ephesians 2:20 speaks of the church as built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone.

1 Corinthians 3 is speaking theologically; Jesus is the foundational reality on which Christianity rests. Ephesians 2 is speaking historically; the apostles and prophets provided the authorized testimony about the faith.

1 Corinthians 7 advises against marriage

BUT

In the pastorals Paul advises younger widows to marry (1 Timothy 5:9-14).

1 Corinthians 12:12ff.: How many parallels should we make between a body and the church since Paul compares the two? How many of these parallels does Paul himself make, and how many additional ones seem appropriate even though he does not make them? The danger here is allegorizing the comparison. A person should remember that he can claim biblical authority only for the ones that Paul observes. If the additional idea is expressed elsewhere, it is simply a matter of connecting it with this figure for memory's sake.

In 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul is the least of the apostles.

BUT

He is not the least bit behind the most chief apostle (2 Corinthians 12:11; 11:5; cp. Galatians 2:6ff.).

His being least of the apostles has reference to his extreme work against Christ at first. In that way he opposed what apostles do; so he felt "little" because of it. On the other hand, his labors for Christ and his capacities, qualifications, and gifts for that work were "second to none."

Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens.

BUT

Galatians 6:5 says that every person is to bear his own burden.

1. One deals with responsibility while the other with caring.
2. One deals with one part of a person's responsibilities while the other deals with other parts of a person's responsibilities. There are some responsibilities that no one can share and other ones that we need help with if we are going to make it through.
3. Though the two texts use the same terminology, they deal with different topics. The first deals with our responsibility to help correct another person's weakness when they fail; the second deals with their responsibility for their own failures. The combination retains the interpersonal character of Christian growth. We are dealing with different burdens. They are complementary truths, neither of which can be pushed to an absolute.
4. The law of contrast notes that "*bear one another's burdens*" contrasts with "*I have enough problems of my own without worrying about other people's problems.*" "*Each person will bear his own burden*" equals "*Don't be telling everybody your problems all the time. People have enough problems of their own. Each person is responsible for himself.*"

Ephesians 5:27-28 teaches that the man is for the woman (on the analogy of being like Christ, who is for the church)

BUT

1 Corinthians 11:9 says that the man is not created for the woman, but *vice versa*.

The husband and wife are “for” each other in different senses. He is for her as Christ is for the church—providing, protecting. She is for him as a helper appropriate to him as a human person.

Ephesians 6 provides no armor for the back; it assumes we are to be facing the battle.

BUT

We are supposed to flee from the devil.

Incompatible figures do not mean incompatible truths. This is a species of mixing metaphors.

Philippians 3:6 records Paul’s claim that as touching the law he was blameless.

BUT

1 Timothy 1:15 has Paul admitting that he was the chief of sinners.

1. In Philippians he claims to be blameless in the sense of external compliance to legal requirements; “chief of sinners” refers to unwitting opposition to God’s purpose in Jesus. External compliance is implied by “being found,” evidently by those who might judge in the courts.
2. “*Chief of sinners*” is an attitude he took toward himself because he persecuted the church. It is also an attitude that he recommends everyone take toward themselves to enhance humility; 1 Timothy 1:15 calls it a faithful saying. Being something everyone should take to heart, it cannot be objective fact: everyone cannot be the worst sinner.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 raises the question of how many conceivable relationships you can imagine for body, soul, and spirit.

The basic question raises issues about interpreting lists. Lists are not necessarily exhaustive, parallel, homogeneous, or sequential. That means the reader cannot infer from the number of things from the number of words. Several arrangements have been offered: (a) body, soul, and spirit are parallel; so man is tripartite in nature; (b) body and spirit are held together by soul; (c) soul is comprised of body and spirit; (d) man is body and soul/spirit in that soul and spirit are equivalent terms with “soul” used when the transcendent element is thought of in connection with the body and “spirit” used when that aspect is thought discretely.

1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6 call for the ambiguous qualification “husband of one wife.” How many likely ways can this expectation be understood?

1 Timothy 5:8 says that anyone who does not provide for his own household is worse than an unbeliever. Does this mean that a wife, for instance, has no obligation to help support the family financially if the husband’s wages do not meet the family’s needs? What other meanings are not appropriate here? What conceivable circumstances are apparently beyond Paul’s frame of reference?

1. “Anyone” (τις, *tis*) and “his own” (τῶν ἰδίων, *tōn idiōn*) could both be masculine or feminine; so from a language standpoint it cannot be shown that he is referring to husbands or fathers particularly.
2. The point is negligence on the provider’s part; hence, it is not necessarily a restrictive statement that only the provider has any responsibility in the matter. Paul is prohibiting negligence, not assistance. Prohibiting assistance would depend on the wrong set of contrasts.
3. It does not mean that the wife has nothing to do. It means the provider has something to do.
4. Proverbs 31:10-23 provides a good control verse, which makes clear that a woman’s working is not forbidden here.
5. Role reversal is beyond Paul’s concern. “Man” is not necessarily masculine. Cultural considerations may open up options not available to honorable female employment in the first-century Mediterranean world. Cultural variance has little to do with the apostle’s point; he would give the same directives today.
6. The context is concerned primarily with financial and physical matters. Paul does not want the church to be “burdened” unnecessarily, but the church does have the calling to share in a family’s efforts at spiritual encouragement and provision. Since Paul is dealing with an either-or case, he must not be talking about spiritual provision, which both family and church provide.
7. Providing for the children for their whole life is a subject beyond Paul’s purview.
8. This is not a contrast between providing for others while neglecting your own that Paul is prohibiting, but a contrast between providing or not providing for your own.

Hebrews 5:12 chastises the readers for not being teachers after such long exposure to Christian teaching.

BUT

James 3:1 warns that not many ought to be teachers because they will receive more exacting evaluation/condemnation.

1. Different types of teaching are in view. There is a shift in word meaning from informal (Hebrews) to formal teaching (James).
2. The authors are addressing two different kinds of people. Hebrews objects to intellectually lazy or disinterested people who do not progress in their understanding so they can help other people understand; James objects to people who are too eager to lead and tell. The succeeding context in James warns about the tongue that cannot be tamed, and the preceding context objects to substituting belief for behavior. In James there is a concern about tellers whose commitments do not push them to be doers (cp. James 2); they tell but don’t do. A person should not teach if he does not know what he is talking about and if he is not living what he teaches. Some people are not concerned to take responsibility; others try to take responsibilities they are not prepared for. Hebrews means that people should grow so they can teach;

James means that people should not teach because they have not grown. One group is not seeking to minister; the other is trying to minister for the wrong reasons. Unworthy motives can explain why people try to talk about things they are not prepared to discuss.

In Hebrews the emphasis is on not knowing. The readers are weak in understanding; so their lack of knowledge disqualifies them from teaching. In James the emphasis is on doing. The readers are warned not to teach if they are not willing to practice what they preach (preceding context) and if they are not willing to control their tongues, which reflects their inner character (succeeding context).

The two authors are dealing with degree matters. Neither Hebrews nor James expresses ideas that should be pushed to an absolute.

3. Hebrews and James may have different audiences in mind. Hebrews may envision a select group who have not advanced theologically as they should, while James addresses a general audience comprised of the whole church.

Hebrews 7:7: *“The less is blessed by the greater.”*

BUT

Luke 2:28 says that Simon—who would have been the lesser—blessed God. Other texts like Psalm 145:1, 2, 21; 34:1 say, *“I will bless you forever and ever.”*

1. There is a shift in the word meaning on “bless.”
2. The Hebrews text is a progressive present rather than a characteristic present. Without doubt in this case of blessing, the lesser is being blessed by the greater.

Hebrews 9:27 teaches that it is appointed to men once to die.

BUT

Enoch and Elijah did not die at all. The widow of Nain’s son, Dorcas, the widow of Sarepta, and Lazarus died twice.

James 1:13: *“God cannot be tempted with evil.”*

BUT

Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus was tempted in all points such as we are, yet without sin.

A person might be tempted to infer that Jesus was not deity; yet the same book has one of the strongest statements about his deity (Hebrews 1:8; cp. John 1:1; *etc.*).

1. Part of the issue here relates to the meaning of *tempt*. The word *tempt* can mean (1) to present with something intended to get to do what he should not do; it can mean (2) to present with something that actually creates in the person a sense of being lured; and it can mean (3) to present with something that succeeds in causing a person to succumb to the lure. Of course, anyone could be presented with a temptation that the other person tries to use to get him to sin; so James means “tempt” in the second or third sense. Since the text

goes on to say that a man is “*drawn away by his own lust*,” James probably means that physical things do not offer any lure to God because he is spiritual. There is nothing wrong with being presented with a lure (sense #1) and there is nothing wrong with feeling the pull of a temptation; sin enters the picture only when a person gives in to the temptation (#3).

2. This last point leads to a second part of the issue, which involves a distinction between non-incarnate and incarnate deity. The difference between the incarnate and non-incarnate states could explain the difference between Hebrews 4:15 and James 1:13. The Hebrew writer is talking about Jesus during his time among us in the flesh. In that state he faced hunger, thirst, and the other bodily drives; he was lured by the concern about pain, as the struggle in Gethsemane shows. If that were not the case, he would not have experienced what it was to be human, and he would not have been prepared by human experiences in such a way that we can be sure he understands what we are going through. Knowing that he faced those things and struggled with them is what makes him able to help us when we are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). We understand that if he succeeded against this temptation, so can we.

The answer to the problem, then, is to say that it is in the non-incarnate state that James means God cannot be lured-tempted by temptation (#2); but the Hebrew writer's point is that God in the person of Jesus Christ was lured-tempted by various temptations (#2) but did not give in to them (#3).

James 2:14-26: A man is justified by works, not only by faith (2:24); Abraham was justified by works (2:21)

BUT

Romans 3-4 and Galatians 2 teach that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:28); Abraham was justified by faith (Romans 3:1-5)

James is talking about what we are to do—believe and do; Paul is talking about the value of what we do. For him, “works” means actions done in a legal context where the consequence comes inherently out of the doing. “Faith” means trust in another to give what the actions themselves do not produce. Actions, we say, have a conditional value, not a causal one. Righteousness and relationship with God are consequences we are viewed by God as having, not results we produce by what we do.

James 5:19-20 could mean what legitimate ideas when it says that the person who saves a soul from death covers a multitude of sins (cp. 1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 10:12; cp. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)?

1. Are the soul saved from death and the one who has the multitude of sins the same one?
2. Is there a difference between saving someone from death and covering sins (as in individual sins of the one who converts him)? Could cover mean get rid of sins in the sense of keeping them out of the picture in the first place. A person who is

concerned to convert others watches his own behavior more closely so it will not thwart his evangelistic efforts.

3. Is there anything bizarre about saying that one person can save another one? How can a person cover a multitude of sins; *i.e.*, can a person redeem someone else's sins? Is it not Jesus' blood that covers sins? Does that imply that the multitude of sins belong to the converter? If they belong to the converter, covering them by converting another would not be meant in a way that would allow the converter to count on making up for his sins in a quantitative way. The sense in which it would be true of the converter's sin would be as follows: In the converter's efforts to convert someone, God could see where the converter's heart is. In other words, efforts at trying to help someone else indicate his own sense of identity with Christ and concern for righteousness.
4. Love covers a multitude of sins because it encourages a loving person to overlook faults in other people. A loving person wants the best for others and wants to accentuate the positive in them. That kind of person looks at their strengths because those are the things from which he must work to get better yet. Love does not criticize because it does not focus on faults. A comparison can be made with Luke 7:47, where Jesus says, "*Her sins, which are many, are forgiven because she loved much.*" Whoever is forgiven little loves little. Forgiven much because loved much; loved much because forgiven much (cp. 7:41-42).
5. A loving person will have his faults overlooked by others because in his loving them he is overlooking their faults among other things.

1 John 1:8: "*If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*"

BUT

1 John 3:6; 5:18 say, "*Whoever abides in him does not sin; whoever sins has not seen him or known him. /We know that everyone who has been begotten by God does not sin, but the One begotten by God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.*"

1. First, we may ask whether the author speaks of Christians or non-Christians. Does "we" 1:8 mean we people as if to say "*if people say they have no need to be saved from their sins, they deceive themselves*"? The alternative in 1 John 3 and 5 speaks of Christians.
2. We do not want to make this set of passages turn only around the distinction between sin as a state (1 John 3) and sin as an act (1 John 1). The idea would play into the hands of eternal security. The variable needs to be set between occasional sin and characteristic sin. This variable correlates with unintentional and deliberate.
3. There needs to be an awareness that John is counteracting Gnostic influence, which was trying to make Christianity operate according to the principles of Gnostic thought. The concern here was state of ontological being, and action was an irrelevant category, because it was not behavior but knowledge that brought about this condition. The alternative John is concerned with is that sinning is irrelevant (1 John 3) and therefore of no concern to Christians. If sin

were of no concern, we would be characteristically caught up in it. Gnostics taught that sin was indifferent and that they were above sin. The two comments of John correspond with these Gnostic notions.

4. “Sin” vs. “not sin” is comparable to righteous and not righteous. In the absolute sense there is none righteous, no not one (“*continue to do all*”); yet scripture several times speaks of certain people as being righteous.
5. In Romans 7 Paul speaks of what is in his members in contrast to the real “I.” The contrast he has in mind can have a parallel with the categories of 1 John.
6. In Roman Catholic theology, the sin/not variable correlates with venial and mortal sin. Christians commit venial sins but not mortal ones; otherwise they are not Christians.
7. Another variable is personal real experience—we sin—vs. the way we are viewed.

Revelation 1:8 (see Psalm 90:2)

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