Let’s take the smallest piece of this and ask if Jesus was ever wrong about anything. First, let’s be sure we understand what someone being wrong means. Most modern(ist) statements of epistemology this means this someone believes a proposition, *p*, to be true, but which is not true; or believes some proposition *p* to be not true, but which is true. Statements are either true or false; beliefs about statements are either right or wrong. For example, Jesus first recorded saying is that he must be about his Father’s business (he said this to explain his absence to his earthly parents). The proposition is “Jesus must be about his father’s business,” and we can easily believe that Jesus was right.

So, let’s take a statement that Jesus made in argument with some Sadducees. He said, “Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed [c](http://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Lk20.37#footnote0)at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Before examining this, I would like to consider that I was wrong in my previous statement, as least in one sense. The fact is, Jesus never said the English words, “Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed [c](http://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Lk20.37#footnote0)at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” for the obvious reason that Jesus didn’t speak English; in fact, English did not yet exist. Before you excoriate me for casuistry, please note that I don’t think I was very wrong; just a tiny little bit wrong, wrong in a basically uninformative and uninteresting way. But the fact remains that I was wrong, if only in a small and uninteresting way.

I’m sure you see where I am going — Jesus said that Moses called the Lord “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” In a very similar (and trivial and uninteresting way), Jesus was wrong; Moses did not call the Lord “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” for Moses did not speak the language that Jesus was speaking, whether it was Aramaic or Koine Greek. Again, I must emphasize Jesus’s intent was not literal quotation, and to insist on that would be a little bit mad. But in this (insignificant) way Jesus was wrong.

The problem, though, is adopting an all-or-nothing stance — Jesus can never be wrong about anything — leads us into this corner. One way out of the corner is to admit that statements can be wrong in varying degrees (I was a little bit wrong) and from varying perspectives (Jesus was right in arguing his case, but wrong from the insignificant perspective of quotation). The biblicist will rightly note that this view of truth is a harder job, because we have to ask about not only about propositional content, but propositional intent, and propositional quantification (and that’s just the fallout from this short discussion). But I hope I have shown, in a small way, that this is the world as it is, as God has given it to us, and so we have to discern truth the way God reveals it.

Does not the existence of the four gospels point this more complicated view of truth? Three Gospels that more or less go over the same ground, sometimes with the very same words, sometimes not, and one in which the language and tenor differ? I don’t think our job is (as I use to think) to put the jigsaw together and come up with a perfectly consistent (in the modernist sense) narrative, but to enjoy and be converted by the enhanced, four-dimensional view of the life and teachings of Jesus, to say nothing of the additional perspective of Paul.

This brings us nowhere close to accepting natural selection as the best explanation for evolution, or denying a historical Adam directly created by God. But I hope it opens the window a bit to let in some light in how a faithful Christian can also believe in natural selection and a non-historical Adam.