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Our Part in the Plan of Redemption

A slave forced to stand in the marketplace, bound, is unable to secure his own freedom. There is no effective negotiation that can accomplish his being set free. He is unable to earn enough to purchase his freedom. He is unable to simply walk away from the condition of being a slave. He is wholly dependent upon another paying the required price for his freedom. This image captures an important aspect of the New Testament word for redemption.

This is the central theme of all Scripture, the redemptive work of God accomplished through Jesus Christ. The Bible records the unfolding of God's plan to rescue humanity from sin and restore fellowship and relationship with Himself. From the earliest promise made in the Garden of Eden to the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles in the first century, Scripture consistently points toward Jesus Christ as the Redeemer; the one who would enter the place of bondage, pay what the slave could not, and set him free.

Paul's statement summarizes this central theme, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Redemption shows this idea of freedom through payment. Scripture teaches that all of humanity is enslaved by sin. Jesus stated, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34), while Paul also affirmed that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin separates humanity from God and creates a condition from which they cannot deliver themselves.

The seriousness of the condition of enslavement to sin is revealed by the cost of redemption. Peter writes that Christians were not redeemed "with corruptible things, like silver or gold," but "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Redemption's basis is in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the cross demonstrates, at the same time, the severity of sin and the magnitude of divine grace.

This redemptive plan is evident throughout the Bible pages. Genesis 3:15 anticipates the defeat of Satan through the Seed of woman. The promise made to Abraham that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" through him (Genesis 12:3) is explained in Galatians 3:16 as ultimately referring to Christ. The sacrificial imagery of the Mosaic Law prepared humanity to understand the work of Jesus. The Passover lamb, the shedding of blood, and the repeated offerings under the Law all pointed beyond themselves toward the greater sacrifice. Yet the book of Hebrews emphasizes that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Christ alone obtained "eternal redemption" by entering with His own blood (Hebrews 9:12).

Redemption is entirely dependent upon what God has accomplished through Christ, making Salvation an act of

divine grace. Paul states that believers are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed" (Titus 2:14).

Scripture never portrays man as a passive entity in the Redemptive plan. Christ is the author of Salvation "to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). Additionally, Scripture also teaches that those who are baptized into Christ enter the One in whom redemption is found (cf. Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:7). Christ accomplished redemption by His blood. Through a person's obedient faith in the Gospel, culminating in baptism into Christ, we become partakers of that redemption.

Yet being partakers of redemption creates responsibility. The grace of God does not and should not produce spiritually passive Christians. Those who have been redeemed are charged to represent the Redeemer and proclaim His message (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; 2 Timothy 4:1-2 et.al.). Paul describes himself and his fellow-workers as "ambassadors for Christ" through whom God petitions the world (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador does not originate the message he carries; he simply, dutifully, and faithfully communicates the message that has been entrusted to him. Likewise, Christians possess neither the authority to alter the gospel nor the liberty to remain indifferent toward those who have not heard it.

This responsibility is inherent in the mission given by Christ. Jesus commanded His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The pattern of the early church demonstrates how seriously that obligation was understood. The apostles preached Christ publicly. Christians who were scattered by persecution "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Paul instructed Timothy to entrust the truth to "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Evangelism was not regarded as an optional activity reserved for a specialized class of Christians or a paid and appointed individual. It was the natural weight of obligation from a community that understood both the love of God and what He had done for them.

In Romans 10, Paul further deepens the responsibility of the connection between salvation and the responsibility of God's people who have been redeemed to proclaim His redemption to the lost, unredeemed world. The flow from Salvation to those lost needing to hear the Gospel proclaimed (Romans 10:13-15) is a deliberate progression. He places the responsibility of proclaiming redemption to those who already know, and have themselves, participated in redemption.

The relationship between redemption and evangelism is theological long before it is methodological. Christians evangelize not because congregations need numerical

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Alleged Contradictions in the Bible (4)

We continue our analysis of fifty contradictions in the Bible (<https://www.bartehrman.com/contradictions-in-the-bible/>) by Marko Marina. To this point we have learned two things (at least): first, he does not know what a contradiction is; second, he manipulates material and feigns it as a contradiction. Our analysis below of two more points he offers to his readers illustrates this.

#14 – Conflicting Accounts of Paul’s Journeys

The life of the apostle Paul provides another example of biblical contradiction when comparing his travel narrative in Galatians with that in the Acts of the Apostles. In Galatians 1:17-2:9, Paul emphasizes that, after his conversion, he did not go to Jerusalem immediately.

Instead, he traveled to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. He states that he visited **Jerusalem only three years later**, staying for 15 days and meeting only Cephas (Peter) and James. He explicitly notes that he did not meet any other apostles at that time.

Afterward, he went to Syria and Cilicia, and 14 years later, he returned to Jerusalem for the apostolic council, possibly corresponding to the events of Acts 15.

In Acts 9, however, Paul’s movements after his conversion appear different. According to this account, Paul stayed in Damascus for many days, preaching the gospel before fleeing due to a plot against his life. He then traveled to Jerusalem, where he met Barnabas and was introduced to the apostles, with no mention of his journey to Arabia.

The text suggests he stayed in Jerusalem for a longer period, preaching openly before leaving for Caesarea and then Tarsus. Later, Barnabas brought him from Tarsus to Antioch, where Paul began his missionary work.

The two accounts **differ significantly in timing, locations, and the people Paul met**, creating challenges for harmonizing the narratives.

In his Commentary, therefore, Joseph Fitzmyer rightly points out that “Luke [Fitzmyer believes that the name of the author of Acts is Luke] says nothing about Paul’s journey to Arabia or his return from there to Damascus (see Gal I: 17). Nor does he indicate that the “considerable time” (9:23) was actually “three years” (Gal 1:18).”

RT: The first point to notice is that there was no contradiction offered, nothing! The “strength” of his so-called contradiction is “balanced” on the tip of a stick-pin with the words “appear” and “suggests.” Neither word is helpful to him in making a case associated with contradiction. As a reminder, this is what he said about what a contradiction is: “In the context of the Bible, contradictions occur when there are two or more accounts of the same event or concept that differ so significantly they cannot both be true at the same time.”

In his criticism or feigned critical analysis of the information concerning Paul’s conversion, travels, and interaction with the apostles does not even amount to an inconsistency. He can’t even, in this setting, even manipulate

words to make/fabricate a contradiction! Thus, his idea of a contradiction in a biblical context is to be **rejected out-of-hand!**

Our primary source of information comes from Acts 9, 22, 26, and Galatians 1-2. Our critic says that Acts 9 appears different from what is said in Galatians 1. In Acts 9, Paul goes to Damascus to arrest Christians; while in route, he is converted to the Lord (9:1-19). After his conversion he began to preach. While in Damascus (for many days, v. 23), a plot is made against Paul, but he escapes (9:20-25). In Acts 9:26, we read Paul went to Jerusalem. Those in Jerusalem were hesitant to accept Paul, but Barnabas mediated an acceptance (9:26-29).

What did Paul say in Galatians 1? Paul speaks of his commission and mission after his conversion. Regarding his commission, the message he preached came from Jesus, not any man (1:11-12). When Paul was called by God (his conversion), he did not go to Jerusalem or confer with any man; rather, he went to Arabia, then Damascus (1:15-17). Following that, he went to Jerusalem to see Peter for about two weeks, seeing none of the other apostles. From that visit, he went to the region of Syria and preached (1:18-23).

From this information, what is the contradiction? Our author gives us nothing except “In Acts 9, however, Paul’s movements after his conversion appear different.” I want you to notice what he wrote, “...movements after his conversion **appear** different” (bold added, RT). In his following words nothing is said to strengthen “appear” to something like “this was actually what he did” – which is no small matter. Again, our critic wrote that Paul said nothing of his time in Arabia, only that the text suggests a period longer than fifteen days (notice the word **suggests**).

“The two accounts **differ significantly in timing, locations, and the people Paul met**, ...” This is a complete fabrication, not an element of truth in it. First, he offers no contradiction. Second, what he did offer does not even amount to an inconsistency, only a manipulation. Third, manipulation turns into a fabrication, which is another word for lying.

Chronology of Paul’s conversion: Paul is converted.

- (1) In Damascus he spends time after his conversion in the same environment (9:1-19; 22:1-16; 26:12-20).
- (2) In Acts 26:20, Paul mentioned he began to preach in Damascus, then Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and to the regions outside of Judea. In Galatians, Paul tells us from where he got his authority to preach (1:11-17).
- (3) While in Damascus he preached Jesus is the Anointed of God (9:20-22).
- (4) After “many days” in Damascus (three years), Paul learns of a plot against his life and escapes (9:23-25; Galatians 1:18).
- (5) Saul/Paul goes to Jerusalem for fifteen days (9:26-29; Galatians 1:18). Paul’s return to Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 22:17 is not the same return

here but corresponds to the events related to Acts 15.

(6) Paul leaves Jerusalem for Tarsus (9:30), not returning to Jerusalem for fourteen years (Acts 15:1-29; Galatians 2:1-2).

There is **absolutely** no contradiction in the passages, only a variation that complements one another like a hand in glove.

#15 – The Genealogy of Jesus

One of the most well-known examples of the contradictions in the Bible lies in the **differing genealogies of Jesus** presented in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. Both Gospels trace Jesus' lineage, but they do so in significantly different ways, with notable discrepancies in names.

The differences in the lists of names are striking. For example, Jesus' grandfather in Matthew is Jacob, whereas it's Heli in Luke (Matthew 1:16; Luke 3:23).

Similarly, the genealogies diverge dramatically in the generations following David. Matthew traces Jesus' descent through Solomon, emphasizing the royal line, while Luke follows Nathan, another son of David, presenting a priestly or prophetic lineage.

Some have suggested that Matthew provides Joseph's legal lineage, while Luke traces a biological or maternal line. However, Bart Ehrman, in *Jesus Interrupted*, notes: "It is an attractive solution, but it has a fatal flaw. Luke explicitly indicates that the family line is that of Joseph, not Mary (Luke 1:23; also Matthew 1:16).

RT: The two genealogies are in no way contradictory; they are different, but different is not contradictory. Matthew's recording has one focus, Luke's recording a separate focus. Our critic does not offer a contradiction at all; he writes that in one genealogy (Matthew's) Jesus' grandfather is one name, but in Luke it is another name. Here is how he states it: "The differences in the lists of names are striking. For example, Jesus' grandfather in Matthew is Jacob, whereas it's Heli in Luke (Matthew 1:16; Luke 3:23)."

He offers no contradiction; he offers us a difference and calls it a contradiction. Let us be reminded of what a contradiction actually is: "A contradiction occurs when a proposition asserts both a statement and its negation simultaneously." This does not occur above in his critique. The differences in the genealogical records of Matthew and Luke are not even close to being contradictory. They are different, nothing more.

That being said, is there a reason (or are there reasons) for the difference? Anthony Flew, in his debate with Gary Habermas, spoke of the genealogy difference being irreconcilable (Habermas-Flew Debate, p. 9), but is that so?

Lange (commentary on Luke 3:23-38, E-Sword) gives a plausible rationale to the difference between the two. Luke, not writing to a Hebrew / Jewish oriented reader, wrote giving emphasis to Mary and her ancestry. "If Mary became the mother of our Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit, He could have no male ancestors but hers, and the name of Eli, His grandfather, must stand immediately, be-

fore that of Jesus, in His genealogy, since the introduction of the mother's name was not customary, and that of the father impossible in this instance."

CONCLUSION: By this time in our study and reading of our critic, he has long abandoned the definitional meaning of contradiction in application but has been excessively manipulating the biblical text into a problem that does not exist. There is a difference between the two genealogies, but no contradictions.

Ron Thomas— Minister at Rio Grande Church of Christ

Claims of Christ

Christ made many claims of who is was and the power He possessed. Consider the following:

Matthew 28:18-Jesus claimed that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth.

Matthew 5:27-28-Jesus claimed authority above that which is written in the scripture.

John 10:30- Jesus claimed that He and His Father are one.

John 14:6- Jesus claimed that He is the only way to the Father. He is the truth and He is the life. There is not other ways, truths and lives. It is only in Him.

John 17:5- Jesus claimed to be with God before time was. He also claims glory with the Father.

John 5:24- Jesus claimed that His word leads to everlasting life.

John 6:38- Jesus claimed to have come from Heaven to do the will of the Father.

John 6:54-55- Jesus claimed ability to raise the dead. Not only does He claim this ability but He also shows the ability by the raising of Lazarus (John 11).

John 8:24- Jesus claimed that a person would die in their sins if they did not believe that He was the Son of God.

John 12:48- Jesus claimed that His word will be the judge of mankind in the last day.

John 14:1-3- Jesus claimed that He will return again someday.

The claims that Jesus made about Himself are claims that no ordinary man could make. He did not just claim to be a good teacher or a prophet. He claimed to have all authority, to have existed with the Father before the world began, to give everlasting life, to judge mankind, and to be the only way to the Father. These are not small claims. They are claims that require a person to make a decision about who Jesus really is. Either Jesus was making false claims about Himself, or He truly is who He said He is. The evidence given in Scripture shows us that Jesus is the Son of God, and because of this, we should not simply listen to His words, but believe in Him and follow Him.

Scott Judge— Minister at Elm Grove Church of Christ

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growth for preservation. They evangelize because they themselves have experienced the mercy of redemption they themselves proclaim. Those who understand the incredible price paid for their redemption should develop an equal and corresponding concern for those who remain separated from God as a slave to sin.

Christians do not contribute to the accomplishment of redemption. Christ has accomplished that work fully. They do, however, participate in making redemption known. The church does not save the world, but it has been entrusted with the saving message and the redeemed have been entrusted to represent and point to the Redeemer.

God has fulfilled the promise of redemption first made in Eden. He has paid in full the price of redemption. He has also revealed the plan to continue the proclamation concerning the Redeemer. The fitting response is gratitude and proclamation. Because Christians have been partakers of redemption, now, they each, bear the responsibility of carrying that message to others.

Our part in the plan of redemption is to proclaim it!
Dave Deagel- West Virginia School of Preaching

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AREA EVENTS UPCOMING

September 4, Friday Night Sing, Sunrise Church of Christ 598 Old Turnpike Rd. Parkersburg WV 26104

September 11-13, Gospel Meeting, Ed Benesh, Scioto Valley Church of Christ, 651 Ervin Avenue Chillicothe OH 45601

September 12, Lectureship, Various Speakers Sermon On The Mount, Oakland Church of Christ 1300 Memorial Drive Oakland, MD 21550

September 13-17, Gospel Meeting, Steve Higgonbotham, Paintsville Church of Christ 412 11th ST. Paintsville KY, 41240

September 19, Lectureship, Various Speakers, Indiana Church of Christ 225 E. Pike Rd, Indiana PA 15701

September 19, Crum Lectureship, Various Speakers Crum Church of Christ 278 Crum Rd. Crum WV, 25669 Crum WV

September 19, Ladies Day, Amantha Cole, Oakwood Rd. Church of Christ, Oakwood Road Fairmont WV 26554

September 20-23, Gospel Meeting, Andy Robinson, Sunrush Church of Christ 1597 Western Avenue Chillicothe OH 45601

September 25-26, Youth Rally, Scott Judge, Hosted by Sunrise Church of Christ, 4-H Grounds 2203 Butcher Bend Rd. Mineral Wells WV 26150

September 27-30, Gospel Meeting, Bill Watkins, St. Clair Avenue Church of Christ, 16150 St. Clair Avenue East Liverpool OH 43920

September 27- Oct 1, Gospel Meeting, Roger Rush, Newport Church of Christ, 25 Woodland Dr. Newport, OH 45768

October 4-7, Gospel Meeting, Phil Sanders, Bridge Street Church of Christ, 1139 S Bridge Street, New Martinsville WV 26155

October 4-7, Gospel Meeting, Tim Hatfield, Henderson Church of Christ 209 Walnut St., Henderson WV 25106

October 4-8, Gospel Meeting, Newcomerstown Church of Christ, 475 South Goodrich Street Newcomerstown OH 43832

October 10, Elm Grove Lectureship, Elm Grove Church of Christ 8155 Chenoweth Fork Rd. Piketon OH 45661, 740-434-8721

October 25-29, Victory Lectureship, West Virginia School of Preaching, 4th St. and Willard Ave. Moundsville WV, 26041