

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

**DOCTRINE OF THE VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION
OF GOD’S WORD IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES**

LESSON TEN: APPARENT DISCREPANCIES IN THE BIBLE (PART 3)

I. INTRODUCTION

There are many doctrines in the Bible. God wants us to study and learn these doctrines well so that we may “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” VPP teaches the Bible is without mistake. But, without VPP, how can we know if all these doctrines in the Bible are without mistakes?

When we come to “those things which are hard to be understood” in the Bible, what should be our approach and attitude? Should we straightaway and say “the Bible got mistakes”? Or should we seek and study in all diligence and humility, to attempt to reconcile, harmonise and find out the possible solutions to these apparent discrepancies in the Bible? What if there is no answer and solution to the discrepancies? Are we going to conclude that there is a mistake in the Bible? God forbids us to hold such an evil stand! We must never end up being a critic and judge of the Bible and say “the Bible got mistakes.” The infallible and biblical principle to guide us in our humble study of God’s Word is, “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

May God help us as we seek to “study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

II. MATTHEW 5:3 COMPARING WITH LUKE 6:20

Matthew 5:3, “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Luke 6:20, “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed *be ye* poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.”

Problem: Why are there two different readings, “poor in spirit” and “poor”?

Answer: Because of the different readings, some believed that they were spoken by Jesus in different occasions. This was unlikely due to many similarities in terms of location and people. Even the events were the same before and after the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Jesus. There are at least two solutions to this problem.

Firstly, Luke’s account was a brief one compared to Matthew’s. Luke only records 3 of the 8 beatitudes. As such in his recording of the first beatitude, he wrote as mere “poor” though understood as in spirit as well.

Secondly, both accounts are correct and complementary to each other. Each writer wrote according to his eye-witness account or the information given him. They wrote based on their perspective, directed by the Holy Spirit to pen down the infallible account.

The interpretation of Scripture requires that, when two or more passages are similar, yet not the same, the clearer one explains the others. The more explicit clarifies the less explicit. By comparing scripture with scripture, we see that the Matthew account is more explicit than Luke’s account. Therefore, the conclusion is no contradiction at all.

III. MATTHEW 8:5-13 COMPARING WITH LUKE 7:1-10

Matthew 8:5-13, “⁵ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, ⁶ And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. ⁷ And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. ⁸ The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. ⁹ For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. ¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ¹¹ And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹³ And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.”

Luke 7:1-10, “¹ Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. ² And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. ³ And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: ⁵ For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. ⁶ Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: ⁷ Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. ⁹ When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ¹⁰ And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.”

Problem: Did the centurion go personally to Jesus or not? If these records are describing the same account, why are they not exactly the same?

Answer: This is one and same account in both gospels due to the many similarities between the two. However, the problem persists: did the centurion meet Jesus personally or not? Could the centurion come out to meet Jesus personally after he has sent the elders of the Jews as well as his friends at different time to Jesus? It is possible but unlikely since there is no reason for the centurion to do this.

Matthew's account did not explicitly state the centurion was beseeching the Lord Jesus face to face or in person even though their conversation seems to imply that. The representative principle is applied here. The elders of the Jews and his friends represented the centurion to implore the Lord.

For example: The Bible records Pilate taking Jesus and then scourged Him (see John 19:1). It is most certainly that it was not Pilate who took up the whip and punished Jesus by his hands personally. Pilate passed down the order, and his men followed the command. His men represented Pilate in the act of punishment. Likewise, we see the same thing here in the account of the centurion who sought after Jesus through the elders of the Jews and his friends. As such, the conclusion is no contradiction at all over here.

IV. MATTHEW 8:28 COMPARING WITH MARK 5:2 & LUKE 8:27

Matthew 8:28, “And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.”

Mark 5:2, “And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.”

Luke 8:27, “And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs.”

Problem: How many demon-possessed man came out of the tomb to meet Jesus, one or two?

Answer: Applying the logic of faith, whenever there are two, there is always one. There were two demon-possessed men who came to Jesus based on Matthew’s account. However, though there were two men being possessed by demons, the accounts by Mark and Luke chose to focus on one of them. By mentioning only one does not negate the fact that there were two as Matthew has recorded. As such, the conclusion is no contradiction here.

V. MARK 6:8 COMPARING WITH MATTHEW 10:9-10 & LUKE 9:3

Mark 6:8, “And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse.”

Mat 10:9-10, “⁹ Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, ¹⁰ Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.”

Luke 9:3, “And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.”

Problem: Are the disciples supposed to take their staff or not?

Answer: According to Mark’s account, the disciples were not allowed to take anything with them except their staff. The reason for that was probably the dire need to trust God to provide when doing God’s work. The staff is for safety purposes as they maneuvered rough and dangerous terrain as well as to defend against robbers or wild beasts which they could encountered along the journey.

However, we note that both accounts in Matthew and Luke seem to contradict Mark. Please note and understand that both accounts in Matthew and Luke do not prohibit the disciples to take a staff. It is the taking of more than one staff that is forbidden. They needed only one staff for their journey. There is no need for them to bring more than one. As such, the apparent contradiction is solved. The conclusion, therefore is: there is no contradiction at all.

VI. MATTHEW 20:29-30 COMPARING WITH MARK 10:46-47 & LUKE 18:35,38

Matthew 20:29-30, “²⁹ And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. ³⁰ And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.”

Mark 10:46-47, “⁴⁶ And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Luke 18:35,38, “³⁵ And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: ... ³⁸ And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Problem: How many blind men did Jesus encounter when leaving Jericho?

Answer: Matthew 20:29-30 makes it clear that as Jesus was leaving Jericho that there were two blind men sitting by the road. If there are two blind men, then there is certainly at least one there as well. The focus is upon one of the blind men and his name was Bartimeaus. Both did called out for healing (Matthew 20:29-30). But, Mark and Luke focus on Bartimeaus' account maybe because he was the loudest and most determined, a point worth focusing on for spiritual reasons because God wants us to be persistent in laying our needs before Him. There is no contradiction here.

VII. MATTHEW 21:2-7 COMPARING WITH MARK 11:2-7 & LUKE 19:30

Matthew 21:2-7, “² Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. ³ And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. ⁴ All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. ⁶ And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, ⁷ And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.”

Mark 11:2-7, “² And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*. ³ And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. ⁴ And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. ⁵ And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? ⁶ And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.”

Luke 19:30, “Saying, Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*.”

Problem: Were one or two animals brought to Jesus?

Answer: Matthew 21:2-7 tells us that there was both a donkey and a colt. The accounts by Mark and Luke focus on the colt only and mention that no one had ever sat upon it. The accounts by Mark and Luke focus on this detail while the account by Matthew focuses on the prophetic fulfillment (Matthew 21:4-5). Logically, if there are two animals, it means also at least one animal. To say there was one does not mean there weren't two. Therefore, there is no contradiction.