

The Gospels in Harmony

Rightly Dividing the Word

May 13, 2018

Welcome to where we're learning how to rightly divide the Word!



If every word you've spoken and action you've taken so far this year were divided into those that align with God's Word and will and way, and those that don't, how do you think you'd do?

Do you go with your gut or with God?

Do you lean on your Lord or yourself?

When facing the choice, *never* lean on your *own* understanding. I'll let Scripture make my case:

Oh, the **depth** of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his **paths** beyond tracing out! Who has known the **mind of the Lord**? – Romans 11:33-34a NIV

Can you discover the **depths** of God? – Job 11:7a NAS

Consider the **work of God**; for who can make **straight** what He has made **crooked**? – Ecclesiastes 7:13 NKJ

What is **crooked** cannot be made **straight** ... – Ecclesiastes 1:15a NKJ

O Lord, how great are **Your works**! Your thoughts are very **deep**. A senseless man does not know ... – Psalm 92:5-6a NKJ

For "who has known the **mind of the Lord** that he may instruct Him?" But we have the **mind of Christ**. – 1 Corinthians 2:16 NKJ

Can you discover the **depths** of God? – Job 11:7a NAS

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your **ways** acknowledge him, and he will make **straight** your **paths**. – Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

You see, **when you lean on your own, you're on your own.**

If you're not gonna trust Him 100%, why trust Him at all?



If you won't trust, He can't lead.

As I tried to harmonize the Gospels into one perfect account I hit an impossible barrier. Last week I told you how I had to get out of my own way, and stop forcing the stories to fit my assumptions and expectations.

Turns out, **I was trying to straighten things out on my own.** I wouldn't let the Lord say *what* He wanted, the *way* He wanted 'cause He wouldn't say it the *way* I wanted Him to.

Every one of the 200+ published Gospel harmonies severs several story-ties in an effort to straighten out the Work of God. That's why they end up with: Jesus coming *down* a mountain *before* going *up* the mountain; Jairus interrupting a dinner *weeks after* it's over; Jesus *leaving* Jairus' daughter *before* resurrecting her; Jesus *returning* in a boat *before* leaving in the boat; the disciples *receiving* the Spirit *before* it's promised; and on and on and on.

Whenever we force our *faith* to fit our *agenda* it'll fail us.

Only the Good Shepherd can straighten what *He* has made crooked. Want to see how?



This is a shepherd's crook. **It's solid and unbendable like God's Word.** So, **how can you straighten this crook without changing it?** *You can't.* But, *I can* (pretend I'm Jesus) by turning it to change the way you see it.

He doesn't change *His* Word.

He changes *our* perspective.

200+ attempts to straighten it by cutting and pasting it.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. – 2 Timothy 2:15-17 NKJ

He makes our paths straight by shifting our view so that we can see that *it* was never actually crooked ... *we were!*

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits [i.e. **motives**]. Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts [i.e. **perspective**] will be established. – Proverbs 16:2-3 NKJ

The Word doesn't change. So it's *wrongly dividing* to change it. If you're ready to commit to God being God in *His* way and *His* timing, your default mindset each day should be: ***"Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, in me, with me, to me, and through me; and help me get out of my way."***



When I finally gave in, and let Peter deny Jesus *six times* instead of *three*, not only did the story bloom, but it resolved the "contradiction" of Jesus' *two warnings*. **It's all about who our heart appoints as God.** When we're tired of beating our head against a wall, **we either give up on God, or give up on our self as being a god, and surrender to Him, align with Him, lean on Him, and learn from Him.**

I sure recommend the latter. When I finally let the Word say what it would, I watched it blossom into a garden of resolutions for all of my most impossible problems!



Tradition tells us that Jesus ascends on day 40, at the Sea of Galilee; but, **Mark** and **Luke** say He ascends on day three 70 miles away. They also say the disciples watch Him enter Heaven and take the throne. (Mk 16:19; Lk 24:50-51)

Only **Matthew** and **John** describe day 40 at the sea, and neither mentions His ascension. According to Matthew:

Jesus came to them [on day 40 (Acts 1:3; Jn 21:14) at the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:1)] and said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** – Matthew 28:18 NIV

How is *that* possible if He hasn’t taken the throne?

Atheists point to several ascension contradictions; but, if we just let Jesus ascend on day three, and then appear over the course of 40 days, “POOF!” a dozen inconsistencies disappear.

And, every Unbreakable Story Block is left intact and in order! If you’re not bound to tradition, it’s almost *too easy*. Yet, with very few exceptions, the 200+ published harmonies create several contradictions by wrenching the ascension onto day 40.

Now, if you’d like Jesus to go up the mountain (where He appoints the Twelve) before He comes down; and Jairus to interrupt Matthew’s dinner, you just have to allow Jesus to appoint Matthew as one of the Twelve *before* He calls him to follow Him. **But tradition says that call is when Matthew becomes a disciple. Well, Scripture sure doesn’t. So, pick one.** In fact, Mark says:



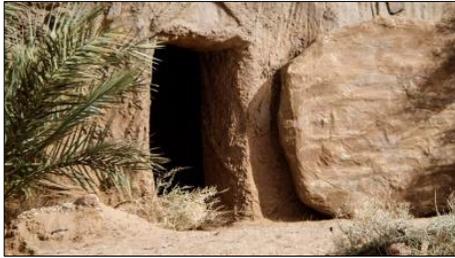
Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. [Sea of Galilee] ... As he walked along, he saw Levi [Matthew] son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. [‘Cause he was a tax collector] **“Follow me,”** Jesus told him, and Levi **got up and followed him.** – Mark 2:13-14 NIV

What’s that **“Once again”** refer to?

This story from the chapter before:

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon [Peter] and his brother **Andrew** [who was already a well-established disciple (Jn 1:40-41)] casting a net into the lake, **for they were fishermen.** [You see, Jesus hadn’t yet called His *disciples* to leave their day jobs for full time ministry and training] **“Come, follow me,”** Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once **they left their nets and followed him.** – Mark 1:16-18 NIV

Just let Matthew be one of the Twelve *before* Jesus asks him to leave his day job (like the Scriptures say), and “VOILA!” Jairus can interrupt the party *and* Jesus can go up before He goes down.



Now, John and Luke weave together to show that Peter went twice to the tomb; yet, almost every harmony forces him to go once (creating all kinds of unnecessary contradictions).

Just let the man go twice! And, “PRESTO!” Otherwise you’ll never question why the man-in-white inside the tomb tells the women to go tell Jesus’ disciples ... *and Peter*. (Mk 16:5-7)

Why is Peter addressed separately from the disciples? Remember those six denials, declared publically with an oath? He’s no longer a disciple! So, when the women report *everything they were told*, (Lk 24:9-10) including Peter no longer being included ...

They did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. – Luke 24:11-12a NIV

Why? He had to know how they knew his shameful secret. And, want to know the heart-attack that was waiting for him at the tomb?

[Later, the Emmaus couple] ... found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” – Luke 24:33b-34 NIV

But, only if you let the poor guy return alone to the tomb.

I just wish we had time to talk about the Wise Men arriving in Nazareth, the devil’s *four* temptations, two *bookend cleansings* of the Temple, Pilate’s *five* attempts to save Jesus, the *two* veils in the Temple, or the confession of the guards at the tomb. Oh well, *another day*.

Or, just wake up, and read, and believe, and diligently seek.

Test Him. He rewards. Seriously. He really, really does. I tell you, it’s like low-hanging fruit!

He just can’t not exceed our wildest expectations.

That’s the hallmark of a loving dad. Always fixing more than you ask him to.

Perhaps you’re thinking, “I wouldn’t know where to begin.” **Just trust that He is.**

And lean on Him, and let Him speak to you through His Word.

Ask Him to *open* your eyes and ears, and to *soften* your heart.

And then seek to understand what you trust to be true.

And then get ready to watch your garden blossom.