

Bible Difficulties

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A Common Question

Question: What about contradictions in the Bible?

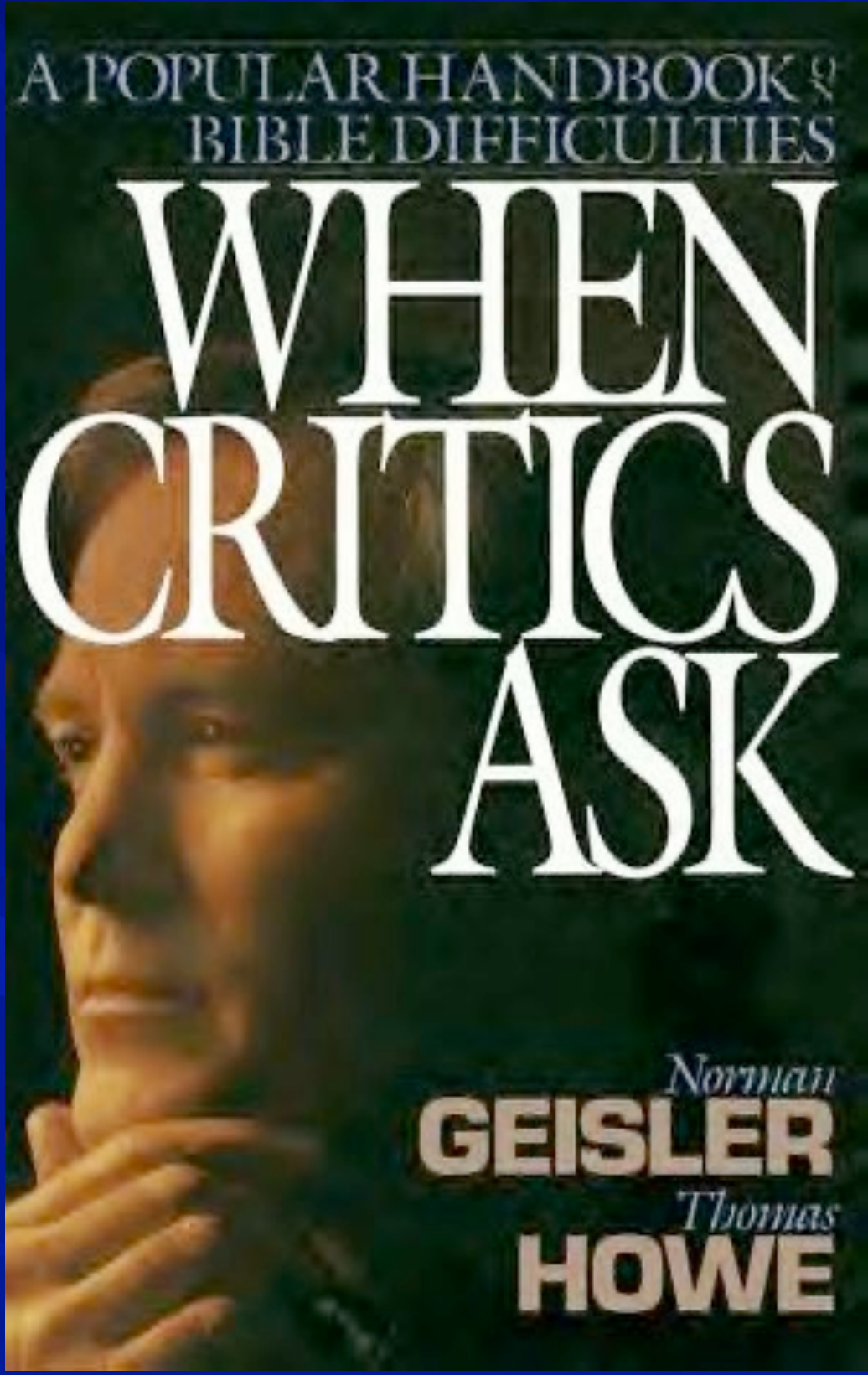
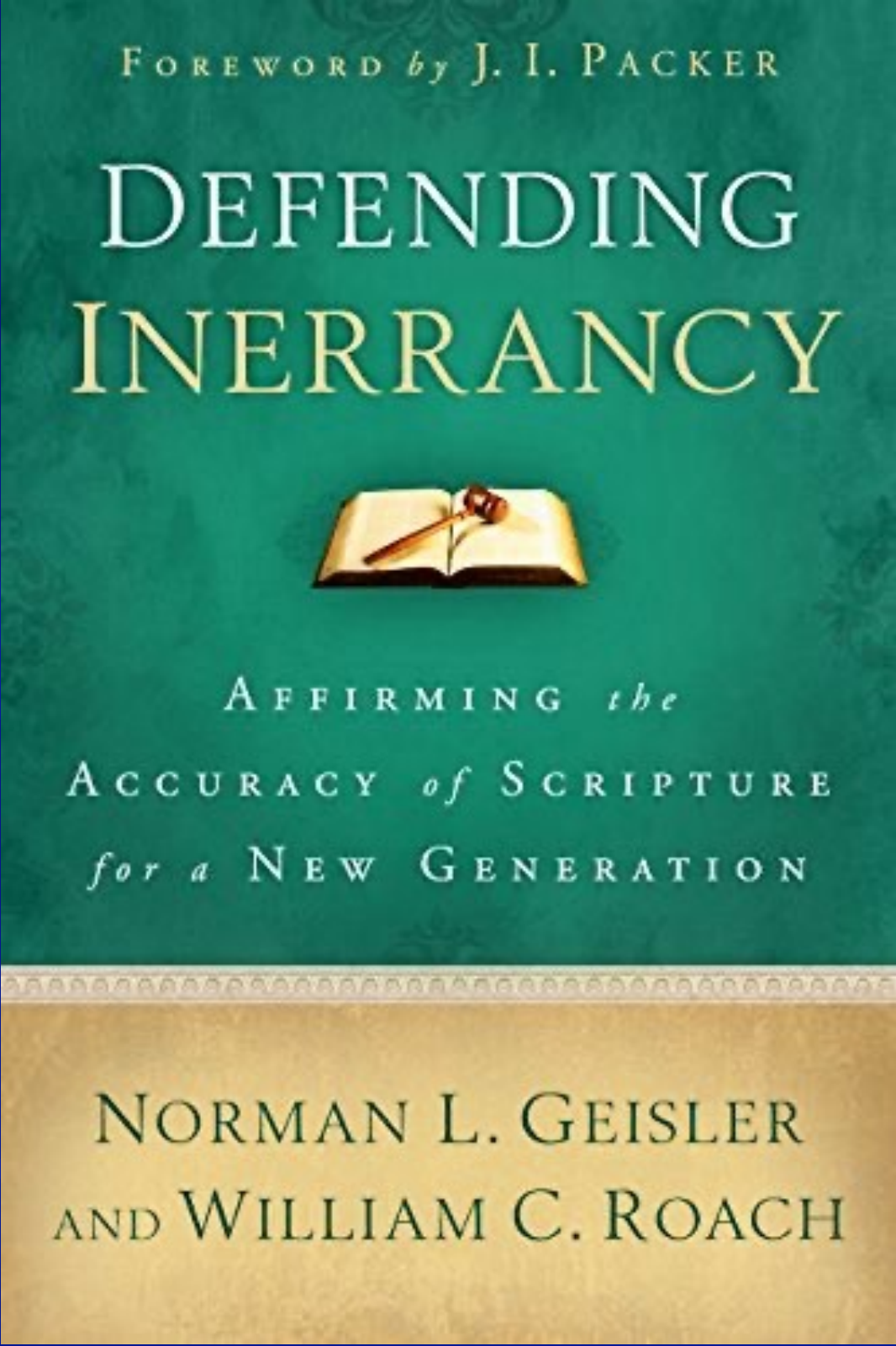
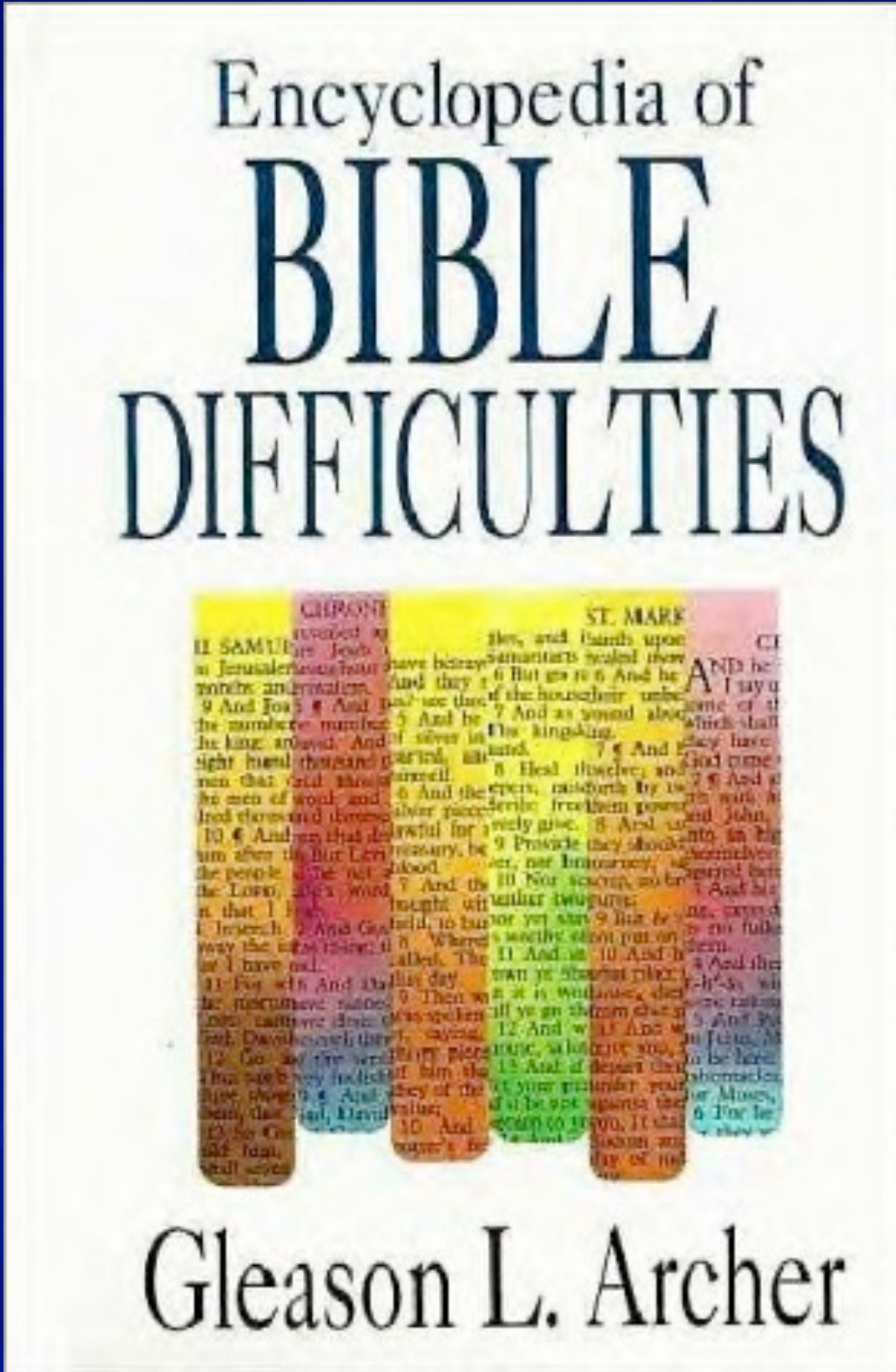
Response: Name one.

Key Issue: Is this a reason for unbelief or an excuse for unbelief?

Sample of Bible Difficulties

- Genesis contains two contradictory creation accounts.
- The gospels record two different genealogies for Jesus.
- The gospels record various events in contradictory ways.
- Bible makes unscientific statements.

Resources



Key Principles

Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:

- Whenever we consider a possible contradiction, we should consider the Bible innocent unless proven guilty.

How to Handle Questions

“The benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself.”

Aristotle's dictum



Key Principles

Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:

- Multiple interpretations are not errors in the Bible but a good reason to look for additional evidence.

Camel & Eye of a Needle

Word could be rope (*kamilos*) not camel (*kamelos*).

Oldest manuscripts say camel.

The later ones could be error when translating from Greek to Latin.

Survey of Bible Difficulties

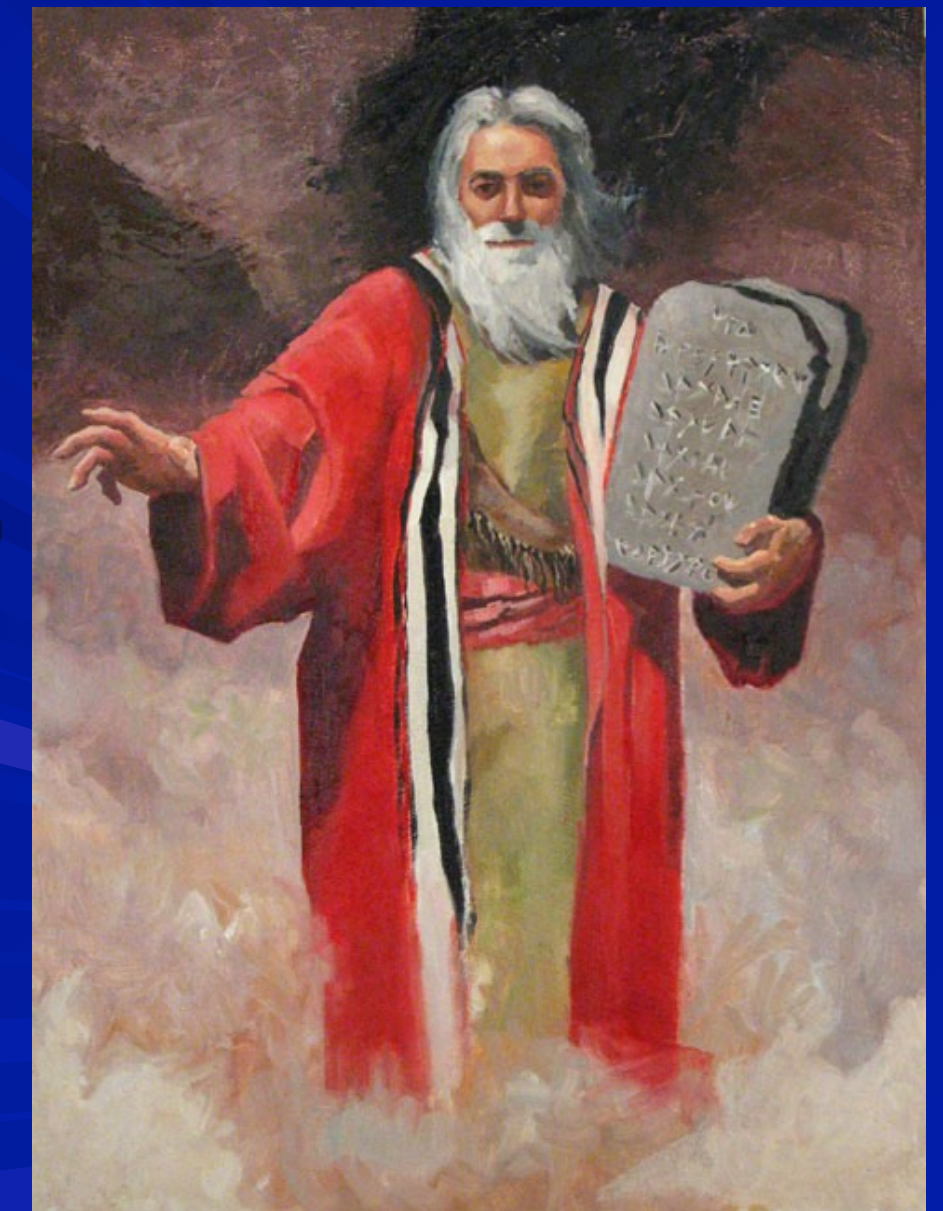
- Historical Problems – *archeology*
- Textual Problems – *contradictions*
- Scientific Problems – *inaccuracies*
- Doctrinal Problems
- Moral Problems



Historical Problems

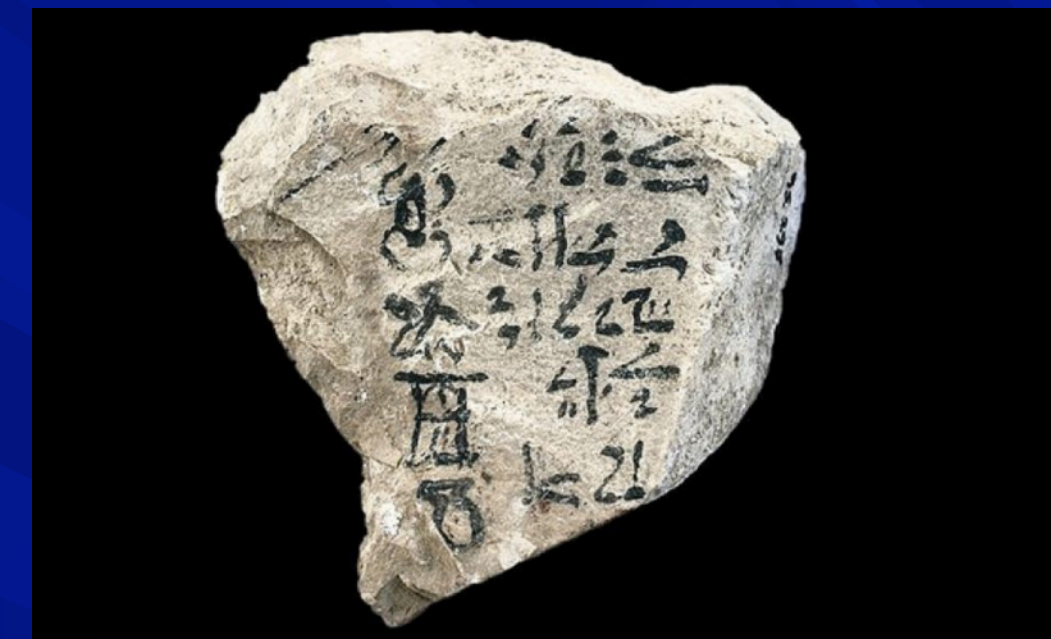
Charge: Moses could not have written the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the Bible) since most people were illiterate at the time.

Response: The Code of Hammurabi was discovered (written 1728 BC).



Historical Problems

Response: The discovery of a semitic abecedary in Egypt.



Response: The discovery of ancient Hebrew in Israel.



Historical Problems

Charge: The biblical writers artificially created the Hittites. This was either an error or an embellishment.

Charge: The American Society of Archeology (1901) claimed that the Biblical account of the Hittites was false.

Historical Problems

Response: Excavations in 1906 at a location 90 miles east of Ankara, Turkey uncovered the capital of the Hittite Empire.



Historical Problems

Charge: The size of Ninevah – “an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk” (Jonah 3:3) was ridiculed by Voltaire as a blatant error.

Response: Archeology later confirmed this description.



Historical Problems

“Whenever historical accounts of the Bible are called in question on the basis of alleged disagreement with the findings of archaeology or the testimony of ancient non-Hebrew documents, always remember that the Bible is itself an archaeological document of the highest caliber.”

Gleason Archer

Historical Problems

“As a matter of fact . . . it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings . . . confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”

Jewish scholar Nelson Gleuck

Textual Problems

*Alleged Contradictions
in the Bible*

Two Creation Accounts

Charge: Genesis contains two different accounts of creation. These two accounts use different names for God and reflect different authors. Also, the narratives contradict each other.



Two Creation Accounts

Genesis 1

Chronological

Broad outline

Sequence important

Elohim - cultural

Genesis 2

Topical

Adam and Eve

Sequence irrelevant

Yahweh - personal

Genealogies of Jesus

Charge: Matthew and Luke give different genealogies for Jesus.

Response: Matthew (written for the Jews) gives the genealogy of Joseph. The genealogy in Luke is the genealogy of Mary (and focuses on His conception and birth).

Temptations of Jesus

Charge: Matthew and Luke record the temptations of Jesus differently.

Response: Matthew describes the temptations *chronologically* while Luke lists them *climactically*. Matthew uses the word “then” while Luke begins the verses with the word “and.”

Key Principles

Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:

- A partial report is not a false report.
- **Example:** inscriptions on the cross.

Inscription on the Cross

Matthew: This is Jesus _____ King of the Jews.

Mark: _____ The King of the Jews.

Luke: This is _____ the King of the Jews.

John: ___ Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

The complete inscription was:

This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Key Principles

Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:

- Divergent accounts are not false accounts.
- **Example:** Peter's denial.

Peter's Denial

Charge: Mark 14 says that before a cock crows *twice*, Peter would deny the Lord.

Matthew 26 and Luke 22 simply say that before the cock would crow, Peter would deny the Lord three times.

Peter's Denial

Response: Matthew and Luke did *not* say the cock crowed only once as opposed to Mark's twice. They simply referred to the cock crowing. "Cockcrowing" was a proverbial expression for early morning. Mark merely provided more detail.

Key Principles

Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:

- Confusing fallible interpretations with God's infallible revelation.
- **Example:** Angels at the tomb

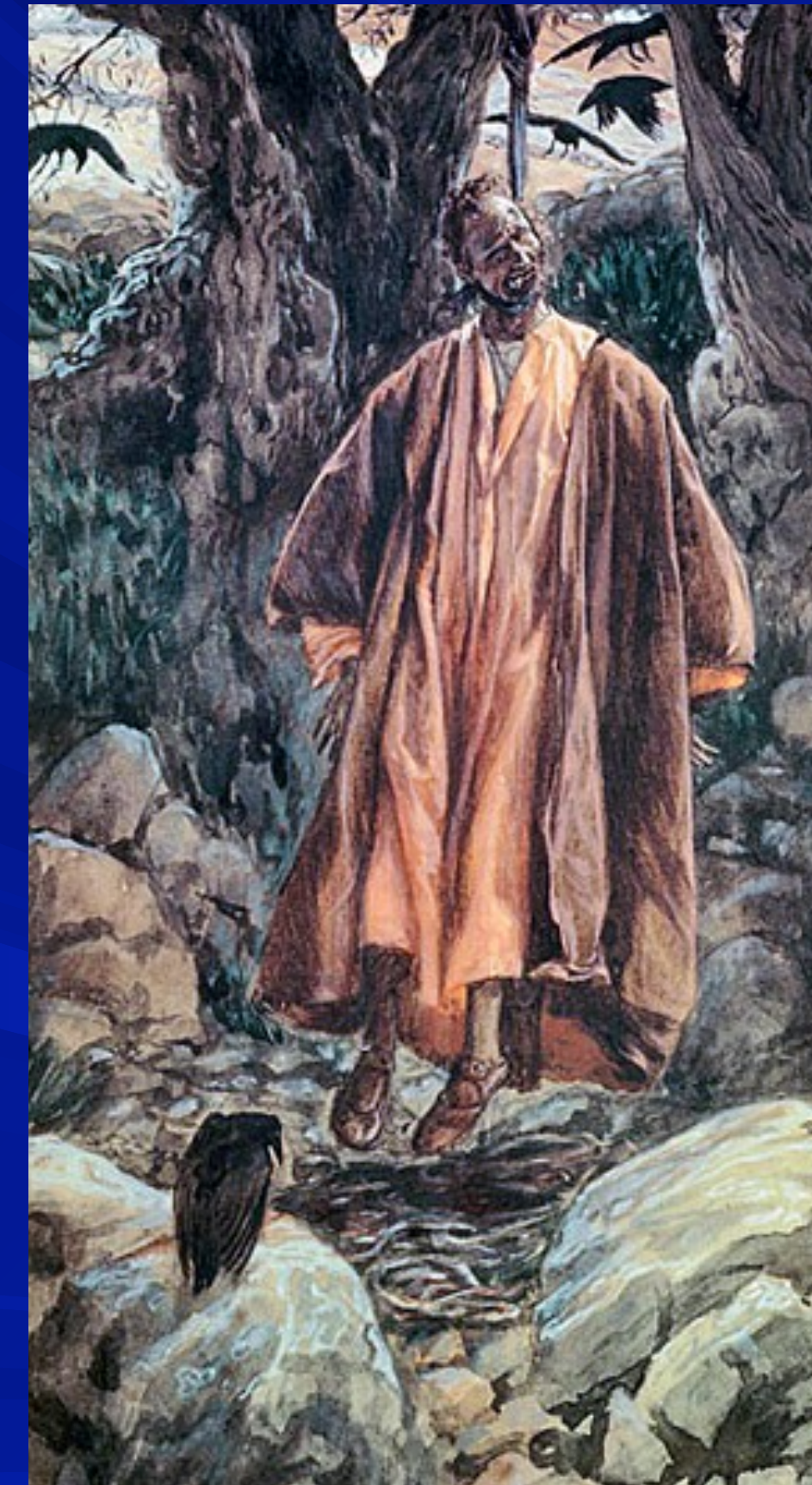
Angels at the Tomb

Charge: Matthew and Mark mention only one angel at the tomb of Jesus. Luke and John refer to two angels at the tomb.

Response: The discrepancy clears up when we realize that there were two groups of women.

Death of Judas

Charge: Matthew 27:5 says Judas hung himself. But Acts 1:18 says Judas fell and was burst asunder.



Death of Judas

Response: Judas hung himself on a precipice over the valley of Hinnom. The rope gave way, his body fell, and burst open and was mangled as described in Acts.



Scientific Problems

Charge: Jesus is wrong when he says that the mustard seed “is smaller than all other seeds” (Matt. 13:32).



Scientific Problems

Response: “No one yet has proved that ancient Palestinians planted anything that bore a smaller seed than that of a black mustard.”

Gleason Archer



Scientific Problems

Charge: Leviticus 11:6 says that the rabbit “chews the cud.”

Response: The movement of their jaws is similar to that of animals that do chew the cud. It is possible that the Hebrew term translated here doesn't mean the same as our phrase.

Doctrinal Problems

Charge: 2 Samuel 24 implies that God incited David to number the tribes. However, 1 Chronicles 21 says that Satan “moved David to number Israel.”

Response: God often allows Satan to perform his evil deeds for some greater purpose.

Key Principles

Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:

- We should not presume that the Bible approves of all that it records.

Moral Problems

Charge: The Bible seems to approve of Rahab's lying (Joshua 2:4-5).

Response: The Bible does not condone what God condemns (Proverbs 12:22).

The Bible approves of her faith as demonstrated by her good works (Hebrews 11:31), but not her falsehood.

Moral Problems

Charge: The Old Testament approves of the practice of polygamy.

Response: While the Bible does say that some of Israel's leaders had more than one wife, it *never* teaches that this is God's intent for marriage.

Deuteronomy 17 actually forbids it.

We Should Expect Difficulties

If someone were to hand me a book that was as simple to me as the multiplication table and say “This is the Word of God” I would shake my head and say “I cannot believe it; that is too easy to be a perfect revelation of infinite wisdom.”

R.A. Torrey

Resources

