

The Gospels in Harmony

Shaking Things Up

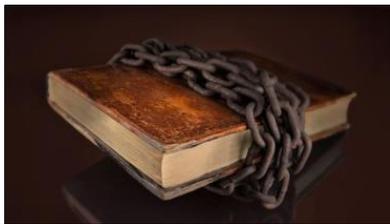
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Welcome to where we're developing an unshakeable faith!

What is God shaking up in your life? The Lord will shake everything that *can be shaken* in our lives until all our trust is firmly founded on Him as our Rock.

If He doesn't shake us, we can't receive an unshakeable faith.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe ... – Hebrews 12:28-29a NIV



We're looking at the concealed Gospel stories that reveal themselves when we apply Isaiah's "line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" principle. (Isaiah 28:9-13)

Last week we saw what will be my Exhibit A: the sign on the cross; because, no two Gospel's *seem* to agree on what it said.



THIS IS JESUS,

THE KING OF THE JEWS

THE KING OF THE JEWS

THIS IS

THE KING OF THE JEWS

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS



But, if we leave 'em as written and weave 'em as instructed, the four harmonize into one. And, by trusting completely in the Gospel accounts we discovered the *two* Temple curtains that had to be torn open to reveal the Holy of Holies.

It's not a case of contradictory accounts.

It's a case of complimentary components.



To leave the Gospels *unwoven*, *content* with their fragmented, opposing, pieces, betrays an underlying belief that God *is* the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33) who *requires our grace*.



Don't assume that God is trying to be clear. He's not. He's trying to train corrupt human hearts to trust Him above our own limited understanding.

And, that requires Him to shake things up.



So, next up is the Centurion's story. He's a battle hardened, death desensitized, callous Roman Commander who had witnessed countless crucifixions. And yet, Mark says:

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And **when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, [he was so shaken to his core that] he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"** Some women were watching from a distance. **[Keep your eye on those women]** – Mark 15:38-40a NIV



Why would he use *that* specific Hebrew Scriptural term? How does he know to apply it to Jesus? Why does he say it *out loud*? Who's he saying it *to*? It's all in the story.

Those who passed by hurled insults at him ... "Come down from the cross, **if you are the Son of God!**" **In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.** ... "Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, '**I am the Son of God.**'" – Matthew 27:39-43 NIV

This Centurion knows the emotional pattern brought on by the cramps and spasms and sheer terror of being crucified: raging, cursing, bargaining, pleading, sobbing, despair, and detachment. And yet, **Jesus radiates courage and compassion.** He asks God to forgive His tormentors. (Luke 23:34) He makes living arrangements for His mother. (John 19:26-27) He even comforts the thief dying beside Him. (Luke 23:39-43) And don't forget those three hours of unnatural darkness.

And when Jesus bowed His head, the Centurion looked up into the shockingly tranquil eyes of a man suffocating in victory. No panic. No second thoughts. **Just peace and calm and joy in a fearless expression of love and trust and power ... on a mission.**

And the Centurion was so shaken by it that he yelled at the mob:

"Surely this man was the Son of God!" [Notice the exclamation point]

Now let's line-upon-line it with Luke and watch the magic!

The curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.**" When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, **praised God** [How? What did he say? Mark already told us: "Surely this man was the Son of God!"] **and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."** [i.e. *guiltless; innocent; virtuous*] When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight **saw what took place, they beat their breasts** [a cultural sign of sorrow and anguish (Lk 18:13)] **and went away.** [Nobody has a good explanation for why everyone has a sudden change of heart; these aren't the people who *knew* Jesus] But all those who knew him, **including the women** who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. – Luke 23:45b-49 NIV

But, Luke *tells us* what these change-of-heart people saw take place: *the Centurion!*

They were so shaken, so overcome, their consciences so startled, that in remorse for what they had done, they beat upon their hearts in a reflexive, customary, show of grief and anguish.

Now, *Matthew's Centurion story* throws *everything* out of whack!

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. When the centurion *and those with him* who were guarding Jesus *saw the earthquake* and all that had happened, *they were terrified, and exclaimed*, "Surely he was the Son of God!" *Many women were there, watching from a distance.* – Matthew 27:51-55a NIV

The critics cry "Contradiction!" and theologians argue endlessly over which account has the highest probability of being true. *I* want to know why the *women* aren't scared like the *soldiers*.

Matthew's story about the centurion and his men *can't* be woven in. Know why? Three little words hiding in plain sight: "after Jesus' resurrection" It's a flash-forward. It has to be relocated.

But where? Matthew *himself* anchors it for us, just twelve verses later.

The Centurion's story not only demonstrates Isaiah's principle, but also how flashbacks and flash-forwards are anchored without guesswork.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, [*"The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open"*] for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. [*Because ... "When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified"*] The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, [*This time the women are afraid like the soldiers*] for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen [*and when we weave the Gospels, this is when it begins that "the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. [And] They came out of the tombs," and one speaks to the two Marys, while two others speak to the next group of women*] ... While the women were on their way, [*the shaken soldiers "who were guarding Jesus" ... "exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'" Then ...*] some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. [*"It's incredible! It's true! He was the Son of God!" But*] When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'" If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the *soldiers* took the money and did as they were instructed. [*I'm guessing the Centurion didn't*] And this story has been widely circulated ... – Matthew 28:1b-15a NIV

These guys are shaken to the core; but, when they go into the city, **the reality of owning that declaration begins to set in. And, they cave to human pressure to deny what they know is true.**



They had their earth shaking raise-the-hand moment of confessing Christ; but, instead of holding onto it, they traded it in. And, by anchoring Matthew's flash-forward, we can see a powerful contrast: **The *dead* come *alive* and go into the city and proclaim the *truth*. And, the *living* become *as dead* and go into the city and proclaim a *lie*.**



Because of peer pressure, which is really fear pressure, **the clearest path can be the hardest to take.** They knew what they should do; just as *we* so often do. But, **their fear of man was greater than their reverence for God.** So, they chose the *faithless path* because it felt much safer. *However ...*

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe. –
Proverbs 29:25 NIV

I wonder how many times in my life I've *chosen* the *snare* because I convinced myself that avoidance was a simpler and safer path. **The path of avoidance is so tempting** when it comes to facing our fears, confronting our friends, forgiving those who've hurt us, restoring our relationships, and dealing with our *own* sins. **But, the path of avoidance will never lead to peace or passion.** Because, **when we allow fear to dictate our decision-making, we lose our power to overcome darkness with light.** And, if we give in to it, and adjust our life around it, we're taking a bribe to keep quiet about all that we know to be true.

Quite often we'll possess a truth that we know needs to be shared, but instead of owning and honoring it, we disregard it. Because, **our desire for comfort is stronger than for truth.**

So, **though He won't forsake us, He will shake us ... to wake us!** In order to remove our comfort so we can grow in trust of truth.

The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. – Romans 13:11b NIV

Let's face it; these *bodies* aren't getting any younger. But, our *spirit should be increasing* in youthful enthusiasm and passion and drive, as we're being transformed by His Spirit inside.

So, when you're shaken, and awoken, don't hit the snooze button. That's a bribe to stay warm and comfy ... *and asleep*, even though you fully know that your hour has come to wake up.

We can commit to something infinitely bigger than ourselves, or cower to something – or someone – much, much, smaller. There are some things - eternal things - bigger than our worst fears of personal peril, or peer pressure, or even life and death.

So, are you going into the city to proclaim truth and new life?

Or, something much less?