

Fish Tale

Seeing God as Unflawed

September 26, 2021

Today we're serving up a mess 'o fish, and a perfect story!

But before we get to that, answer me this: **What did you learn from the Lord this week? Directly.** From God's mouth to your ears. Because I'm a pastor on purpose – and it's a very specific purpose – which is woven uniquely into the vision and character of *this* church. I want *you* to seek, find, and love truth... *without* me, Bruce, or your favorite YouTube pastor.



So, **did you seek this week? Were you up to the task to ask? Did you knock on the Rock?** Because, *God* said:



"For I know the plans I have for *you*, ... plans to prosper *you* and not to harm *you*, plans to give *you* hope and a future. Then *you* will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to *you*. *You* will seek Me and find Me when *you* seek Me with all *your* heart." – Jeremiah 29:11-13 NIV



So did you seek this week? If you had to put a number on it, **what percentage of your heart is dedicated to seeking?** Now, if your number is real low, don't be distracted by guilt. *That's* a trick of the enemy. **Jesus came to free us with truth, not put us into further bondage.** We're *all* guilty. Paul said:



"There is no one righteous, not even one" – Romans 3:10 NIV



But thankfully, as believers, we're *all* forgiven. If you didn't seek this week, in one way or another, if you allowed life's demands to dictate or derail you, ask yourself *why*. Why did you take that bait?



[God has] made men like fish in the sea ... The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, – Habakkuk 1:14-15 NIV

So what's keeping you from getting hooked on God's line? Maybe not enough fear of God, or love for God? Because, it happens whenever we *fear* or *love* anything *more* than God. And our freedom in Christ allows us to look truth right in the eyes, and examine ourselves guilt free, so that we can see who's line is it anyway. And what needs to be *transformed*. Remember, **you are in an alliance with God, and a battle with the enemy.** And you need to *act* like it. So –

"Ask and it will be given to *you*; seek and *you* will find; knock and the door will be opened to *you*. For *everyone* who asks receives; *he* who seeks finds; and to *him* who knocks, the door will be opened." – Matthew 7:7-8 NIV

It's always been up to you how into Him you are. But *now*, Jesus said:

"I am the *Door*. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved" – John 10:9 NKJ



[And yet, He says] “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.” – Revelation 3:20 NIV

So, if He’s *the Door*, why’s He *knocking*? Turns out there’s *another* door ... for *Him* to enter by. Ever been told you make a better door than a window? *Turns out you do!* Because you’re a door *too!* And you have to *open your heart to His door*. Because **as He enters our heart we enter His Kingdom**. And that’s when, as Jesus mysteriously said:



You are in Me, and I am in you. – John 14:20 NIV



And as we enter His Kingdom, we must enter His Word, because **as we enter His Word, His Word enters us**. And *fills* us and *transforms* us into His image by the renewing of our mind with His Word. Bump by bump. **And His Word is perfect!** Says so *itself*:

His way is perfect; – Psalm 18:30 NIV

The Word of the Lord is right and true; – Psalm 33:4 NIV

Every Word of God is flawless; [**has to be!**] – Proverbs 30:5 NIV

Has to be. *Know why?* ‘Cause **you’re only as good as your Word**. He makes *that* pretty clear.

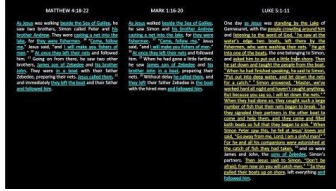
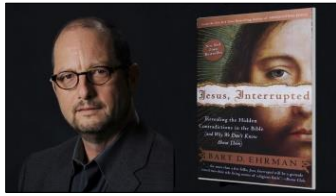
The Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God. – John 1:1 NIV



If God’s Word isn’t *perfect* then God can’t be trusted. And *because* of that, the Bible is under attack like never before; online and in the media, the enemy is methodically tearing into it to tear it apart, in an attempt to discredit God’s Word and destroy His reputation. And there’s an all-out assault on the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), because **they are the *proof* that Jesus is the Son of God who came as a man, and died as a lamb, and rose again!** Now, the Atheists have YouTube videos and slick websites pointing out the seemingly endless contradictions in the four Gospels. But, they’re dead wrong. Because, the Gospels are *flawless*. And I know, because I’ve seen it for myself. So, don’t deceive yourself. Wisdom herself said:

Listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of *your* sight, keep them within *your* heart; for they are life to *those* who find them – Proverbs 4:20-22 NIV

But we’ve checked for ourselves and found nearly every seminary teaches *as fact* that the four Gospels conflict in a way that is impossible to *perfectly, flawlessly*, harmonize. I’ve seen it. Here’s my first NT class textbook talking about Gospels “Prior to the 17th century, the Gospels were widely believed to be inspired by God and therefore true and binding for all people”. And, as Wikipedia casually points out, “Among *modern academics*, attempts to construct a single story have largely been abandoned”. Yup. Bart Ehrman, NY Times bestselling author and Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at UNC, Chapel Hill, explains in: *Jesus, Interrupted* ...



“The approach taken to the Bible in almost all Protestant (and now Catholic) mainline seminaries is what is called the ‘historical critical’ method. ... [To the students’] surprise they learn, ... what historical critics have established on the basis of centuries of research. The Bible is filled with discrepancies, many of them irreconcilable contradictions.” ... [And so] “Pastors are, as a rule, reluctant to teach what they *learned* about the Bible in *seminary*.”

Well I sure am! Because **if they're right, God's wrong, and I quit!** But this is why hundreds of **self-contradicting harmonies** have been produced and published by obviously flawed humans. Each arguing that their methodology should be trusted when there's a discrepancy in the Biblical narratives. And they use all of the extra time they save *not listening* to God, to work on justifying messes like this: This is a piece of last Sunday's simple and straightforward story of the miraculous catch, when Jesus tells Peter to push out into deeper water, and then nearly sinks his boat.

But take a look at the wrench in the Scriptures when flawed-human *harmonies* try to tell the story: Well, Matt and Mark are on the same page. The blue shows identical details. But uh-oh – Luke's lost his mind! The yellow shows contradicting details. In fact, **the only things Luke agrees with, are: “as Jesus”, “sons of Zebedee”, “and followed Him”**. He misses so many details so badly, it's like he's telling a *whole different story!* And so, this particular fish story is used to recklessly condemn God's Word as hopelessly contradictory. *Thanks Bart “Jesus Interrupted” Ehrman!*

These guys point out several contradictions, like: instead of walking along the shore, Jesus is teaching a crowd. Instead of casting his net, Peter is cleaning it. And, they don't leave, the boat, they get in it and go fishing! And so, they recklessly conclude, if God can't get His own story straight, how in the world can we defend it? So, we can accept what the enemy says. Or, we can *blindly* trust God's truth. Or, we can ask and seek and knock and find a rock-solid answer. Because like all puzzles, **they only contradict if you try to match the wrong pieces.**

But for those who trust the authority of the Author and make the effort to play seek and find with Dad – **all those troubling inconsistencies will be replaced with insights, buried treasure, hidden truth, and concealed stories** that were always intended by the Father, and superintended by His Spirit, to be revealed. Because, *Jesus* said:

“No one lights a lamp and hides it ... he puts it on a stand, so that those who *come in* can see the light. [Ah, but you must *come in*] For there is nothing *hidden* that will not be disclosed, and nothing *concealed* that will not be known or brought out into the open. [He's talking about *light – truth*] Therefore consider *carefully* [not *recklessly*] how you listen. Whoever *has* will be given *more*; whoever does not have, even what he *thinks* he has [being contradiction-filled, *not-truth*] will be taken from him.” – Luke 8:16-18 NIV

This is part of *my* created purpose and *my* passion, not only to pursue on my own, but to help you to see and seek for yourself. And we're going to keep finding that **what has been labeled as error or contradiction is really reckless listening.** These guys are not dumb. Just reckless. Which, I guess is pretty dumb. It's like *Paul* said:

Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. – 1 Timothy 6:20-21 NKJ

But now, **blind faith *isn't* trusting without examining.** That's just naïve gullibility and every religion (including Christianity) is filled with people who believe what they believe just because they believe it. But not us! When it comes to His Word and His claims, and *especially* His Gospels at His Place, we're not about to let God off the hook. *Remember why?* Because, ***we don't give God grace, He gives us grace.*** He doesn't need it; and, we don't have it to give. And to think we need to help the Him out, or look the other way, is *sin*. **Blind faith believes that He's God and we're blind.** Jesus was referring to this type of blindness when He said the blind will see and those who *say* they see will be blinded. (Jn 9:39) You see, only *this* awareness, of our blindness, can motivate an ongoing pursuit to *see*. So do you *want* to see? Behold, the Kingdom of God is at hand. In fact, it's *in* your hands, just waiting to enter your heart.



And any hypothesis that tries to explain why the Gospels can't be *perfectly, flawlessly*, harmonized, whether Two-Source, Farrer, Griesbach, or Augustinian, is hogwash; because they *can*. The Gospels were never broken, and don't need fixin'. Because **the Word of God ain't flawed!** So, act on the fact that He's *God* and we're *blind*. In the case of this mess o' fish, Mark is the key that allows us to see. He tells *two stories* that take place *weeks* apart. And *everyone agrees* – even *Bart* – that **Mark describes two separate events.** And the first aligns with Matthew. But the second – which includes Jesus teaching from a boat to avoid the crushing crowds – aligns with Luke! Because Luke *is* telling a whole different story!

Mark and Luke's fish story doesn't contradict Mark and Matthew's – because they're two separate events! They play off of each other. In the *first* story, Jesus promises to *make them* fishers of men. And Peter happily left his *empty* nets. In the *second*, on his knees in a *boatload* of fish, Peter calls Jesus Lord and confesses his sin, and Jesus says, "From now on you will catch men." And just like that, us *blind* askers, seekers, and knockers can *see!* Without *contradictions*. Without fudging, nudging, or grudging. Just careful, loving, listening ... without the "help" of nagging naysayers. *Peter* said:

We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. – 2 Peter 1:16 NKJ

[And God said] Receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. – Ezekiel 3:10 NKJ

Turns out, all of the explanation or commentary that *we* need to see a *perfect* harmony is already in there ... if you're willing to carefully listen and receive it into *your* heart. **We can trust God's Word, but we must seek and ask and knock.** It's built into the system. **It's both a partnership and an ongoing battle.** So, are you ready to seek this week? You up to the task to ask? Ready to knock on the Rock? **Or are you content to just recklessly listen?**