**An Evangelical Response to**

**Bart Ehrman Part 2 –**

# Alleged Contradictions

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Dr. Bart Ehrman was an evangelical who left the faith and currently teaches at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Three books Ehrman has written are: *Misquoting Jesus*, *Lost Christianities*, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, and *Jesus, Interrupted*. Part 2 first looks at some key misunderstandings he has about the Bible, then it answers what he said about the Old Testament, followed by the New.

Part 1 discussed variants in the New Testament, and this part discusses alleged internal contradictions and external problems Bart Ehrman sees in the Bible. He says that the inconsequential contradictions show that the Bible is a human, not a divine book. We halfway disagree and halfway agree: it is a divine book that God used to communicate to us His message. But it is also very much a human book, in that God used the style, personality, and emphasis of the human authors.

Some of the subject material is very detailed, over a broad range of topics, so we should be understanding if Dr. Ehrman (or I) made some small errors on details. However, Ehrman, speaking as a scholar, made some huge, unscholarly gaffes. Ehrman is a bona fide New Testament textual scholar. But his gaffes are such as to call in to question how much of a scholar he is on the New Testament in general.

While I believe Ehrman’s allegations should be answered, no animosity is intended towards him. But speaking as a scholar, he says some things that are flat wrong, and they should be addressed. This paper is intended for Christians who have not heard answers to Bart Ehrman’s claim of contradictions in the Bible.

**“Shocking” Gospel Facts from Ehrman**

**The deity of Christ:** Ehrman acknowledges that the Gospel of John shows that Jesus was God. However, he writes, “…if Jesus claimed he was divine, it seemed very strange indeed that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all failed to say anything about it.” Then he adds with sarcasm, “Did they just forget to mention that part?” *Jesus, Reinterpreted* p.141

Ehrman also says, “But this was not the original view help by the followers of Jesus. The idea that Jesus being divine was a later Christian invention, one found, among our Gospels, only in John. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.249

**Actually,** this is patently false. The synoptic gospels teach that Jesus was divine, to be worshipped, and here is the evidence. Since it is generally acknowledged Luke and Acts were written by the same author, here are a few things from Acts too.

Jesus Himself told Satan that no one should be worshipped and served except God (Matthew 4:10 and Luke 4:8). Yet…

The disciples of Jesus, after Jesus walked on water, worshipped Him in Mt 14:33. None of the disciples ever heard Jesus say this was wrong.

God sent the wise men to worship Jesus in Matthew 2:2, and we should worship too.

From a leperJesus accepted worship in Mt 8:2.

Against this, Luke wrote that Paul and Barnabas refused worship of themselves in Acts 14:11-16.

Jesus would send His angels in Mt 13:41, which are the angels of God (Luke 12:8-9; 15:10). If good angels only follow God, and Jesus would send His angels, this implies that Jesus is God.

The women at the tomb worshipped Jesus, clasping his feet, in Matthew 28:9. Nobody should accept worship except God.

Jesus said he would judge the world (Mt 24:31-46, 25:31-3; Jn 5:21-22, 27). Yet it is God will judge the world (Ps 50:1-6; Joel 3:12; Dt 32:35). This indicates that Jesus is God.

In Luke 7:48-50, Jesus also told the woman who anointed His feet “Your sins are forgiven.” Those who sat with Him said, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

Only God can forgive sins, and Jesus forgave sins against God, showing that He was God in Matthew 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-12, and Luke 5:20-23. Jesus first said to the paralytic “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” The scribes said Jesus was speaking blasphemy, because no one can forgive sins but God alone. Jesus did not contradict their statement. He merely asked a question: “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’ - He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And immediately the paralytic rose up and did that!”

Now someone might reason that perhaps Jesus was merely pronouncing God’s forgiveness, rather than forgiving sins against God on His own authority. However, note that Jesus said, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”. So Jesus said it was He who had the power, and he was not just announcing that the Father forgave. Now,

a) Only God had the authority to forgive sins.

b) Jesus had the authority to forgive sins.

So, what conclusion are we supposed to draw?

At the Triumphal entry in Mark 11:9-10 and especially Matthew 21:15-16, the chief priests and scribes were indignant at the praised Jesus was receiving. Jesus said to them, “Yes, Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants, You have perfected praise?” First of all, Jesus called this praise. Second, No godly king or prophet in the Bible, or even Moses received praise like this. Third, Jesus was quoting Psalm 8:2, where the praised is intended for God. In the gospels Jesus accepted Psalm 8:2 which obviously applied to God, as applying to Him!

After Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples worshipped Him in Lk 24:52; Mt 28:17.

(However, to give you all the facts, Mt 28:17 and Lk 24:52 have textual variants that say “worshipped” instead of “worshipped him”.)

Finally, Luke writes that as Stephen was dying he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59-60). Why pray to Jesus, if Jesus is not God?

**Jesus and Greek:** Ehrman writes, “As Galilean Jews, Jesus’ followers, like Jesus himself, would have been speakers of Aramaic. As rural folk they probably would not have any knowledge of Greek; if they did, it would have been extremely rough, since they spent their time with other illiterate Aramaic-speaking peasants trying to eke out a hand-to-mouth existence.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.105-106 “…the authors of the Gospels were highly educated, Greek-speaking Christians who probably lived outside Palestine.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.106. also in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.112

Jesus was raised in Nazareth, about 15 miles from Phoenicia in one direction, and only about 20 miles from Capernaum, where many Greek and Latin speakers lived. Galilee was bordered on the west, north, and east by Greek-speaking regions. East of Galilee was “the Decapolis”, Greek for ten-cities. The Gerasene demoniac lived in that area. Herds of pigs were raised (and thus also eaten) by the Greek-speaking people who lived there. Jesus preached there when he crossed the Sea of Galilee. He certainly spoke Greek when he preached to them.

Also, Peter is a Greek name, and Nicodemus is a Greek name. It would be surprising if Jesus and a Greek-named person in Jerusalem did not exchange any words in Greek.

Furthermore, look at the coins in Galilee. The following is from *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* by Mark A. Chancey Cambridge University Press. (2005). He says that looking at the coinage in Galilee, “inscriptions were usually in Greek, though a few coins found in Palestine have Hebrew inscriptions.” (p.168) … “Another feature that differentiated Hasmonean coins was their limited use of Greek. Greek characters and monograms, their meanings unclear, are found on certain coins of Hyrcanus I. Most of his money, however, uses a script of Hebrew already ancient by his reign;” (ibid p.169) … “at least one coin of Agrippa II was probably minted in Galilee, as reflected by the wreath-encircled Greek ‘Tiberias” on its reverse. An image of a palm branch and the inscription … [in Greek] ‘King Agrippa, Victory of the Emperor are found on the obverse.” (ibid p.183)

**Answering Old Testament Objections**

This section briefly answers Ehrman’s objections to Old Testament passages in the order in which they are in the Bible.

**Q-1:** In Gen 1:3,14-19 Ehrman asks if light was created on the first or on the fourth day. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.9)

**A-1:** Genesis teaches that light was given on the first day, but the sun, moon, and stars did not appear until the fourth day. In Genesis God did not give Moses scientific words he would not understand, but rather God likely showed Moses what it was like. Current scientific theories of the earth tell us the sun was created before the earth, but earth was originally covered with carbon dioxide clouds, somewhat like a cooler Venus. Only after plants started did the atmosphere change and the carbon dioxide clouds cleared away. If God gave Moses a vision of creation, one would see the light of the sun on the first day, but the sun, moon, and stars would not “appear” until the fourth day, after the plants.

**Q-2:** Ehrman (and others) mention that there are two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.9).

**A-2:** Ehrman failed to mention what is created in each account. Genesis 1 is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and Genesis 2 is the creation of humans in the Garden of Eden.

**Q-3:** Ehrman brings up God being called different names in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.9)

**A-3:** God has a great number of names and titles in the Bible. It seems that the name Yahweh focuses on God’s personal relationship to us in contrast to the name Elohim, which emphasizes His impartial, transcendent aspects.

*735 Baffling Bible Questions Answered* p.21-22 says it was common in ancient cultures to have more than one name for the same god. Here are examples in the Middle east

Osiris – Wennefer, Khea-mentius, Neb-abdu

Bel – Enlil, Nunamnir

Sin – Nanna

El – Latpan

Baal – Larpan

**Q-4:** Ehrman mentions that heretic Marcion (c.170 A.D.) thought it a discrepancy that God did not know where Adam and Eve were after they ate of the fruit. (*Lost Christianities* p.195-196)

**A-4:** Ehrman brings up Marcion’s objection, but Ehrman did not bring up that this was answered well soon after Marcion brought this up. First the answer and then the evidence that this was already explained around Marcion’s time.

God know everything, but like parents deal with children, God sometimes asks questions for which He already knows answers, in order to give people the opportunity to confess to Him.

In Gen 3: God asked Adam and Eve not one but four questions:

**1. Where are you?**

**2. Who told you (where did you learn that)?**

**3. Have you eaten (disobeyed)?**

**4. What is this you have done?**

God’s questions gently led them towards repentance. God did freely forgive them, but they still suffered consequences and did not get the gift of the tree of life back.

Today, God asks people the same four questions!

**1. Where are you?** People in sin often do not know where they are, even though both God and the people around them can see how miserable they are making their own life. “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us,…” (Titus 3:3-4a NIV).

**2. Who told you** (where did you learn that)? People today often believe too many lies instead of the truth from God. “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. (1 Corinthians 11:3-4 NIV)

**3. Have you eaten (disobeyed)?** Whether it is a fount of forbidden (and often lying) knowledge, or forbidden experiences, or a heart set on lesser things, the Holy Spirit is asking: “are you disobeying?”

4. What have you done? Self-inflicted tragedies (both moral and physical) do not usually happen suddenly like a balloon popping, but have the foundation of sin built up over time, like a balloon with a slow leak. James 1:15 says that after desire has conceived it gives birth to sin, and sin, when full-grown, brings for death. Even though a guilty person is without excuse, still, look back and see what choices and heart attitudes led to this catastrophe.

**Early Christian writers** likewise saw God’s questions as revealing their situation to themselves and calling them to repentance.

**Theophilus** (bishop of Antioch 168-181/188 A.D.) in his *Letter to Autolycus* ch.29, was the first to address this question. He said, “And as to God’s calling, and saying, “Where art though, Adam? God did this, not as if ignorant of this; but, being long-suffering, He gave him an opportunity of repentance and confession.” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* p.105)

**Tertullian** in his work *Against Marcion* (207 A.D.) answers this question the following way. “…God was neither uncertain about the commission of the sin, nor ignorant of Adam’s whereabouts. It was certainly proper to summon the offender, who was concealing himself from the consciousness of his sin, and to bring him forth into the presence of his Lord, not merely by calling out of his name, but with a home-thrust blow at the sin which he had at that moment committed. For the question ought not to be read in a merely interrogative tone, Where art thou, Adam? But with an impressive and earnest voice, and with an air of imputation. Oh, Adam, where art thou? - as much as to intimate: thou are no longer here, thou art in perdition- so that the voice is the utterance of One who is at once rebuking and sorrowing.” (*Five Books Against Marcion* book 2 chapter 26).

**Adamantius** (c.300 A.D.) says that God did not ask Adam “because he wanted to make enquiry, but rather to recall something to his [Adam’s] mind.” *Dialogue on the True Faith* first part stanza 17 p.61.

**Q-5:** Ehrman asks, “When Noah takes the animals on the ark, does he take seven pairs of all the ‘clean’ animals, as Genesis 7:2 states, or just two pairs, as Genesis 7:9-10 indicates?” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.10

**A-5:** Ehrman might have had his notes mixed up here. Genesis 7:2 says seven pairs of the clean animals, and one pair of the unclean animals. Genesis 7:8-10 says, “Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, (9) male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. (10) And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.” (NIV)

Genesis 7:9-10 says nothing about how many animals. Genesis 7:8 says that “pairs” (plural) of animals (plural) came. There were multiple pairs, one per kind of unclean animals. There were also multiple pairs of clean animals. In Genesis 7:8 there was no reason to be more specific on the number of pairs here, because six verses earlier it told us how many pairs.

**Q-6:** Ehrman asks if God not make his name (The LORD) known prior to Moses in Exodus 6:3, how did God did He tell Abraham “I am THE LORD” in Genesis 15:7? in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.10.

**A-6:** Four parts to the answer.

**1)** First of all Exodus 6:3 does not say revealed “before Moses’ time”. It only says, “to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”, not Adam, Enoch, Noah, or others.

**2)**

Exodus does not say Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were unaware of God’s divine name. It only says, “I appeared … but by my name Yahweh I never made myself known to them.” While God spoke or appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at least (8, 1, 6) 15 times, God never appeared to these men in a special way associated with His divine name as God appeared to Moses. In fact, when Jacob asked for a name [God’s special name] after wrestling in Genesis 32:29, Jacob pointedly was not answered.

**3)** Comparison of the Septuagint and Masoretic text shows scribes were somewhat free in changing names for God. Julius Wellhausen claimed this was the biggest weakness of his own documentary hypothesis. Genesis 15:7; 18:14; and 28:13 could be later scribal changes. In all three cases in the Greek Septuagint, the word God (*theos*) is used, not the Greek word for “I Am” in Exodus 3:14 (o Ωv), or the Greek word in Exodus 6:3 (*kurios*).

**4)** Finally it is possible that God’s name may have been known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but God was not primarily known as Yahweh. God was revealing a meaning to Moses that God did not reveal to the three men.

(This eliminates 5 of the 53 passages.)

**Q-7:** Ehrman mentions that the heretic Marcion asked how God could be talked out of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. (*Lost Christianities* p.196)

**A-7:** Three points to consider in the answer.

1. In Genesis 18-19 God was not talked out of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah; he did destroy them.

2. God did not need Abraham to plead, any more than he learns knowledge from our prayers.

3. Rather, God interacts with us, in ways that we understand. While sometimes God’s revealed will changes when we change, even in this case Genesis 18:16-33 gives no indication that God changed what he intended to do as a result of talking with Abraham. Sometimes God has condescended to let us know what He was thinking and why.

**Q-8:** Ehrman writes, “The fifth plague was a pestilence that killed ‘all the livestock of the Egyptians’ (Exodus 9:5). How is it, then, that a few days later the seventh plague of hail, was to destroy all of the Egyptian livestock in the fields (Exodus 9:21-22)? What livestock?” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.10)

**A-8:** Exodus 9:3 says it was all the Egyptian livestock in the field. The closeness of Exodus 9:19-20 to Exodus 9:6 makes it obvious the writer did not intend this to be understood as every single animal, inside or outside, but the animals in the field.

Egyptian cattle were usually kept in stables from May through December during the Nile flooding when the pastures were waterlogged. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* vol.2 p.357 says it is likely this plague occurred in January, when some cattle were turned out to pasture. Because the flooding left the Delta later than the rest of Egypt, the cattle would have been in the stables later. If the cattle died of hoof and mouth disease because of the decaying frogs, this would mainly affect the cattle that were in the field.

**Q-9:** Ehrman claims: “The Exodus probably did not happen as described in the Old Testament. The conquest of the Promised Land is probably based on legend” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.5. He provides no support. He goes on to make assertion after assertion, without seeing the need for support. If he feels is probably that the Israelites did not conquer the Promised land, he does not say how he thinks the Canaanites turn it over peacefully.

**A-9:** Actually, the Amarna tablets tell us clearly. They were letters written from Canaan to the Egyptian Pharaoh around 1500-1400 B.C. They mention warfare, with the feared “Habiru running amok”. Later, the Stela of Pharaoh Merenpta (1225 B.C.) also mentions a people called Israel in northern Canaan.

Earlier, during Joseph’s time, archaeologists say a large group of Asiatics lived in the Nile Delta.

A painting on the wall of the tomb of Khnumhotep (1892 B.C.) at Beni Hasan in Egypt shows 37 “Asiatics”, or non-Egyptian people from the Mideast. They had black hair, pointed beards, long many-colored cloaks, bows, and throw sticks.

Christian scholars writing in the *Wycliffe Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, and other books have gathered a great deal of evidence that the Israelites were in Egypt. Not only do Christian scholars teach that the Israelites were in Egypt from about 1875-1445 B.C., but a secular archaeologist, David M. Rohl in his book *Pharaohs and Kings : A Biblical Quest* (Crown Publishers 1995) also documents evidence that is consistent with the Israelites coming out of Egypt. Here is a “Top Ten” list of facts that support the Israelites coming out of Egypt.

**10.** Skeletons of long-haired Asiatic sheep showed they first appeared in the Delta region of Egypt around the time of Joseph. (1900-1800 B.C..) (*Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest* p.354) Joseph’s Egyptian name in Genesis 41:45, “Zaphenath-Paneah” was probably “Zat-en-aph” (he who is called) and “Ipiankhu” (Ipu is alive). The name Ipiankhu and variations were common in the time of Joseph but not very common earlier or later. Many other Hebrew names are found in an Egyptian papyrus in the Brooklyn Museum (35.1446). Under Sobekhotep III (approximately 1540 B.C.), a large number of slaves were transferred to the area of Thebes. Of the 95 names, over 50% of the names were Asiatics, and their Egyptian names were given next to them. Many of the Egyptian names have “he/she who is called” as the first part of the name. Some of these people were recorded as being specifically from the tribes of Issachar and Asher.

In addition, some Hebrew/Semitic names are Menahem and Shiphrah. (This was 100 years before the Shiphrah in Exodus 1 though.) Also, the Leiden Papyrus 348 gives order to “distribute grain rations to the soldiers and to the ‘Apiru who transport stones to the great pylon of Rames[s]es.” See *Christianity Today* 9/7/1998 p.48 for more info on this.

**9.** A non-Egyptian second-in-command made good sense. If Joseph had tried to rebel, Egyptians would not follow him. It is recorded that Canaanites, such as Meri-Ra and Ben-Mat-Ana, had high positions in the Egyptian court. A Semite named Yanhamu was a deputy of Amenhotep III based at Gaza.

**8.** Bricks were used to build some Egyptian cities such as Pithom. At Pithom, bricks were found made with straw at the lowest level. At the intermediate level, the bricks had only stubble. At the top level, archaeologists found that the bricks were made with no binding at all. The tomb of an Egyptian noble named Rekhmere / Rek-mi-Re at Thebes in the 15th century B.C. has a painting of slaves making bricks.

**7.** There was evidence of a great disaster with a great number of hurriedly buried bodies. However, the large numbers of deaths does not prove or disprove that this was due to a sudden event overnight.

Also, Tacitus in *Histories* book 5 lists differing speculations on the Jews being from Crete, or Egypt, or Ethiopia, or Assyrians, and then relates an interesting story. “Most writers, however, agree in stating that once a disease, which horribly disfigured the body, broke out in Egypt, that king Bocchoris, seeking a remedy, consulted the oracle of Hammon, and was bidden to cleanse his realm, and to convey into some foreign land this race detested by the gods. The people, who had been collected after diligent search, finding themselves left in a desert, sat for the most part in a stupor of grief, till one of the exiles, Moyses by name, warned them not to look for any relief from God or man, forsaken as they were of both, but to trust to themselves, taking for their heaven-sent leader that man who should first help them to be quit of the present misery…. Moyses, wishing to secure for the future his authority over the nation, gave them a novel form of worship, opposed to all that is practised by other men. … They slay the ram, seemingly in derision of Hammon, and they sacrifice the ox, because the Egyptians worship it as Apis.” (quoted from *The Annals and The Histories* by P. Cornelius Tacitus, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1952.)

**6.** An Egyptian text dated around 1350 B.C. described a strange earlier event: “The sun is covered and does not shine to the sight of men. Life is no longer possible when the sun is concealed behind the clouds. Ra [the god] has turned his face from mankind. If only it would shine even for one hour! No one knows when it is midday. One’s shadow is not discernible. The sun in the heavens resembles the moon….” This could refer to the darkness over the land, or it could refer to the eruption of the volcano on the Island of Thera.

**5.** Pharaoh Thutmose IV apparently was not the first-born son. In the Dream Stela of Thutmose IV (1421-1410 B.C.) found between the forepaws of the Sphinx of Giza, the Egyptian god Harmakhis promised Thutmose special help to become the next Pharaoh in return for removing the sand that had built up against the Sphinx. He likely would not have needed special help if he were the first in the succession of his father Amenhotep II (1450/1447-1401/1385). Walt Kaiser in *A History of Israel* p.90 says the eldest brother of Thutmose IV was named Webensenu. Webensu was given a burial in the royal tomb, and he probably was the one who died during the tenth plague. The second son of Amenhotep II was Khaemwaset, who married before he died. As Kaiser says, “Thus, while the Sphinx Stele cannot be taken as direct proof of the death of the firstborn, this evidence supports the early date of the Exodus and the fact that indeed Thutmose IV had not expected to succeed his father to the throne.”

**4.** Mixed Egyptian/Hebrew writing in caves near Mt. Sinai describes the parting of the sea, Moses, and catching the quail. The most interesting thing is the language: it was a mixture of Egyptian and Hebrew. The historian Diodorus Siculus (10 B.C.) also knew of this too. Also, at the entrance to the copper mines in Sinai are hundreds of inscriptions. Most of them are in hieroglyphic Egyptian characters, but about 40 inscriptions are in sort of proto-Sinaitic alphabetic script from the 15th century B.C.. Admittedly however, there is no way to date when these writings were made.

**3.** The Egyptian military, which before his time had controlled Canaan, was strangely absent. We do not hear much of their military again, until Pharaoh Seti I who destroyed Hazor in 1300 B.C.

**2.** In Jericho, Bryant G. Wood found strong walls, large quantities of grain (meaning a short siege), and no plundering (since the grain was still there). John Garstang was the one who first found abundant carbonized grain. *Hard Sayings of the Bible* p.182-183 mentions some evidence for an earthquake of magnitude 8 on the Richter scale, which could have left cracks in the walls. The inner mud-brick walls collapsed over the outer stone wall, forming a convenient ramp. When did this capture take place? Ceramic pottery from Cyprus indicates a date between 1450 to 1400 B.C. Egyptian amulets, are inscribed with the name of the current Pharaoh, up to Joshua’s time. Earlier in this century John Garstang had misdated the walls of Jericho in Joshua’s time, but Kathleen Kenyon has proved Garstang wrong according to the *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* p.575. Carbon-14 dating sets the destruction at 1410 B.C. +/- 40 years.

1. As to the destruction of cities in Canaan, Joshua only says the following cities were destroyed: Debir, Eglon, Hazor, Hebron, Jericho, Lachish, Libnah, Makkadeh, and Ai. Archaeologists have found at that time the following cities were destroyed: Arad, Debir, Hazor, the site at el-Khalil (Hebron?), Jericho, and Lachish. The site at Beitin (Bethel?), the city of Gibeon and the site at Khirbet Nisya were abandoned. Perhaps the small town of Ai was destroyed so completely that the site will never be found. The (1500-1400 B.C.) Amarna tablets, mentioned earlier, tell us “Habiru running amok” destroyed these cities. Interestingly, they also mention a king Lab’ayu of Shechem, who was a traitor because he was in confederation with the Habiru invaders. Later, the Stela of Pharaoh Merenpta (1225 B.C.) also mentions a people called Israel in northern Canaan.

In addition, the *Biblical Archaeologist Review* vol.7 (Sept-Oct 1981) says there is evidence of Syro-Palestiniate remains near Qantir, Egypt from 1700-1500 B.C.

Apart from this, Julius Africanus (writing 235-245 A.D.) mentions ancient Greek historians who wrote about the Exodus. “Polemo, for instance, in the first book of his *Greek History*, says: ‘In the time of Apius, son of Phoroneus, a division of the army of the Egyptians left Egypt, and settled in the Palestine called Syrian, not far from Arabia: these are evidently those who were with Moses. And Apion the son of Poseidonius, the most laborious of grammarians, in his book *Against the Jews*, and in the fourth book of his *History*, says that in the time of Inachus king of Argos, when Amosis reigned over Egypt, the Jews revolted under the leadership of Moses. And Herodotus also makes mention of this revolt, and of Amosis, in his second book, and in a certain way also of the Jews themselves, reckoning them among the circumcised, and called them the Assyrians of Palestine, perhaps through Abraham. And Ptolemy the Mendesian, who narrates the history of the Egyptians from the earliest times, gives the same account of all these things; so that among them in general there is no difference worth notice in the chronology.” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* volume 6 Julius Africanus fragment 13 p.124)

**Q-9:** Ehrman asks if killing the infants and toddlers at Jericho really necessary to not have bad influences on his people? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.10, *Lost Christianities* p.196)

**A-9:** Before answering that question, it must be pointed out that Ehrman has no basis for saying what is right and wrong, if he does not believe anything about God. People generally do not want to die, and neither do bugs. Without God setting a standard, why should human life count more than a bug’s life? One could argue that humans think their life is more important than a bug, but a bug could think that its life was more important than a human. So behind Ehrman’s question is an assumption that has no basis apart from belief in a “standard morality” such as would be given by divine being.

Now to answer the question, it is God’s right to define what is right and wrong. Apparently God saw it best to have all ages of Canaanites killed. While we can infer reasons of bad influences, future retribution, etc., but ultimately we have to admit that the Bible does not say why God “made that call”. As Christians we are not to do that today, but if you want to try to say it was wrong for them to obey God in that back then, the burden of proof is on the questioner to show the standard of why it was wrong then.

**Q-10:** Ehrman makes passing reference to the number of soldiers in an army in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.19. He does not give a reference, so I am guessing he might be referring to Joshua 8:25, where there were 12,000 “men” in Ai.

**A-10:** It could have been that there were 12,000 male soldiers concentrated in this small town, because of reinforcements from the other Canaanites. Alternately, in Hebrew people, male and female, can be generically referred to as men.

**Q-11:** Ehrman makes brief reference to the year a certain king began his reign in *Jesus Interrupted* p.19. Ehrman does not get any more specific, but I am guessing he is referring to 2 Kings 8:26 where is says Ahaziah was 22 years old when he began to reign, and 2 Chronicles 22:2 where in the Masoretic text is says he was 42 years old.

**A-11:** 2 Chronicles 22:2 is the Masoretic text is most likely a copyist’s error, because if Ahaziah was 42 years old, he would have been born two years before his father was born. 2 Chronicles 22:2 says “22” years old in some Septuagint manuscripts and the Syriac, according to the NIV footnote. This does not mean the Bible had an error in the original manuscripts, only that unimportant scribal errors can slip in the copies.

*Bible Difficulties & Seeming Contradictions* p.164 adds that in both this copyist error and 2 Kings 24:8 (18) and 2 Chronicles 36:9-10 (8), the tens digit was missed. Numbers written in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah had horizontal and vertical strokes, and if a manuscript was blurred or smudged, one of the strokes would be missed.

**Q-12:** No afterlife? Ehrman writes, “The authors of Job and Ecclesiastes explicitly state that there is no afterlife.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.12

**A-12:** Neither Job nor Ecclesiastes deny an afterlife. Let’s first see what Job says, and then Ecclesiastes.

Job 3:16 is sometimes used to claim that Job denied an afterlife. It says, “Or *why* was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light” (NKJV). Job’s question (not statement) is emotionally lamenting his condition, and not saying what happens to infants who die. Job was thinking at that time the unknown state of stillborn infants might be better than what he was going through. While Job does not say much more about the afterlife in these verses, let’s look at another passage: Job 14:13-22, where Job raised the question of an afterlife and then answers it in three ways:

**1.** Job would not be worried about God covering over his sin in Job 14:16-17, if as soon as Job died, his sins were gone anyway since he was gone.

**2.** Job 14:13 says that Job wants to be concealed in the grave, until God’s anger has passed.

**3.** In Job 13:15, shows Job’s faith; he has confidence that he will stand before God as vindicated, even if it is after he dies.

Finally, Job 19:26-27 says, “And after my skin is destroyed, this I *know*, That in my flesh I shall see God; Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How* my heart yearns within me.” (NKJV)

Since Ehrman has raised so many alleged contradictions, allow me to raise one. If Job thought there was no afterlife, then there would be a legitimate problem in Job 42:10. Job 42:10 specifically says that God gave job twice as much as before. In Job 1:1-3 Job had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 oxen, 500 donkeys, and 10 sons and daughters, all of which were taken from him. At the end, in Job 42:12-15 Job had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, 1,000 donkeys, and 10 sons and daughters. The problem is how did God double everything since He did not double the sons and daughters? But this shows an interesting point. If Job’s first ten children in Job 1:2 were believers, Job would have twenty children in Heaven, and his blessings would be doubled.

Ecclesiastes was written from the perspective of “life under the sun” to show how meaningless (and depressing) life is without God. Ecclesiastes 2:14-15, 3:19-21; 6:6; 9:2-3, in saying that all meet the same fate [death], is true of both the righteous and unrighteous. Under the sun, people who die are not under the sun anymore.

**Q-13:** Old/New Testament Vengeance: Ehrman writes, “The God of vengeance is found not only in the Old Testament, as some Christians have tried to claim. Even the New Testament god is a God of judgment and wrath, as any reader of the Book of Revelation knows. The Lake of Fire is stoked up and ready for everyone who is opposed to God.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.11)

**A-13:** He says some Christians claim God only showed vengeance in the Old Testament, but I know of no Bible-reading Christians who say this. Perhaps Ehrman has in mind some liberal Christians. Regardless though, this is not really an alleged contradiction, but rather just something Ehrman does not like about the Bible.

Briefly, some people don’t want to worship and serve God forever in Heaven. God does not force them. If they don’t want to be with God, Hell may be another universe where people can go instead. However, God is the source of all goodness and love, and this alternative universe would be painful place. As C.S. Lewis said in his book, *The Great Divorce*, “in the end there are only two kinds of people: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done’, and those whom God says to them, ‘thy will be done.’”

**Q-14:** Imprecatory psalms: Related to the previous, Ehrman asks if God really wants his followers to dash their enemies’ infants against the rocks (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.11). His says this is not a contradiction per se, but a mistaken notion about God.

**A-14:** First I cannot help but ask how Ehrman, a self-described agnostic, can judge which notions about God are correct and which are “mistaken”.

The book of Psalms gives examples of people’s prayers. They show David and others praying when joyful, depressed, loving, and even feeling vengeful.

Feelings in the imprecatory Psalms, 35:5-8; 42:11a; 7:8; 69:22-28; 109; 137:9 do not reflect loving our enemies as God taught in the New Testament. These psalms show that we should pray what is on our hearts. God does not have to say “yes” to every prayer, but when we open our hearts before God, we should do so with an attitude that God can change our hearts.

A higher standard is required of us than of them. Christians are to love their enemies as Jesus taught in Matthew 5:43-8 and Luke 6:27-35.

**Q-15:** Ehrman says that Daniel is the last Hebrew [Bible] book to be written, in the middle of the 2nd century BCE (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.262).

**A-15:** This is a claim among liberals. However, he provided no evidence. At Qumran one manuscript of Daniel is dated 120 B.C., according to the *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* p.437. If Daniel was written in 125-175 B.C., then this preserved manuscript must have been almost an original. Also, the Jewish historian Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.8.5 (c.93-94 A.D.) records that when Alexander the Great approached Jerusalem (c.333 B.C.), the High Priest Jaddua met him and showed Alexander part of the Book of Daniel where the Greeks would overcome the Persians. Alexander apparently was impressed, and left the Jews alone.

**Q-16:** Ehrman writes, “And once you throw the Old Testament into the mix, things get completely jumbled. … The book of Amos insists that the people of God suffer because God is punishing them for their sins; the book of Job insists that the innocent can suffer; and the book of Daniel indicates that the innocent in fact will suffer. All of these books are different,…” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.12. also in *Lost Christianities* p.117-118)

**A-16:** Ehrman apparently has a real problem with complementary statements. If someone like Daniel at one time is persecuted because he obeyed God, Ehrman has a hard time accepting that at other time people suffer because God is punishing them. Amos never said that people only suffer because of their sins; Amos was speaking to a specific situation at his time. Job does show that people only suffer for reasons unrelated to the sins of themselves of the people around them, and Daniel does show that God’s people sometimes suffer from unbelievers precisely because they are following God. They do say different things, but they are not incompatible. Different sides of a sculpture look different, but it is the same sculpture. Likewise truth has different views depending on your focus, but the views are complementary, not incompatible.

**Answering Objections about the Gospels**

**Q-1:** Jesus and literacy. Ehrman writes, “We have some information about what it meant to be a lower-class peasant in rural areas of Palestine in the first century. One thing it meant is that you were almost certainly illiterate. Jesus himself was highly exceptional, in that he evidently could read (Luke 4:16-20), but there is nothing to indicate that he could write…. How many could read? Illiteracy was widespread throughout the Roman Empire. At the best of times maybe 10 percent of the population was roughly literate. And that 10 percent would be the leisured classes … Nothing in the Gospels or Acts indicates that Jesus’ followers could read, let alone write. In fact there is an account in Acts in which Peter and John are said to be ‘unlettered’ (Acts 4:13) – the ancient word for illiterate.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.105-106). also in *Lost Christianities* p.203.

**A-1:** Ehrman forgets that the percentage of people in the Roman Empire (Spain, Britain, Germany, etc.) who could not read is irrelevant; it is the percentage of educated people among the Jews in Judea and Galilee that matters. The Jews had a much higher standard of learning than most other peoples in the Roman Empire. The fact that the Sanhedrin accused Peter and John of being unschooled does not mean it was so, or that they could not write at all.

As a side note, at Beir Allah in the Jordan Valley, archaeologists found a schoolboy’s writing practice mentioning Balaam son of Beor three times. This was radiocarbon dated to 800/760 B.C.

**Q-2:** Ehrman acknowledges that Jesus really lived in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.151. But he says that if one made an outline of the key passages of the four gospels they would all be different. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.71. However, “they [the gospel writers] are not completely free from collaboration, since Mark was used as a source for Matthew and Luke.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.144

**A-2:** The fact that they have different outlines is not a problem since they have different emphases. We do not know whether Matthew and Luke used the written gospel of Mark, or just talked with Mark.

**Q-3:** Ehrman claims, “There is no sense in Matthew and Luke that Jesus existed prior to his birth.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.75. also in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.103)

**A-3:** Micah 5:2, which Matthew quotes in 2:6, says that the Messiah’s origins are from old in the Masoretic text, or “from the beginning, *even* from eternity” in the Greek Septuagint.” In Matthew, the scribes skip some parts, including that part about from old, but almost any Jewish rabbi would recognize the rest of this verse.

In both Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34, Jesus says, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” This was said only a few days after the triumphal entry, when Jerusalem turned out to welcome Jesus. So when in Jesus’ earthly ministry, prior to this time, was Jerusalem given a choice to be gathered together under Jesus? Of course the answer is never. Matthew and Luke (and Jesus) had to have been thinking of the time Jesus existed before He was born, when the prophets Jesus was involved in sending to Jerusalem were killed.

**Q-4:** Bart Ehrman says, “It is striking, though, in the Gospel of Mark, that Jesus never refers to himself as a divine being, as someone who preexisted, as someone who was in any sense equal with God. In Mark, he is not God and he does not claim to be.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.79

**A-4:** Mark 2:5-12 (as well as Matthew 9:26 and Luke 5:20-23) that only God can forgive sins, yet Jesus forgave the paralytic’s sins. When Jesus was accused of doing only what God was allowed to do, Jesus neither said he was merely pronouncing God’s forgiveness nor denied their assumption. He instead said, and showed that He Himself had the power to forgive sins.

**Q-5:** Ehrman claims that neither Isaiah 53 nor Psalm 22 mentions a Messiah (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.87). also on p.234. “Originally this passage [Psalm 22:1-18] had nothing to do with a future Messiah, and Jews did not interpret it as a reference to one.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.234

**A-5:** Historically, Jews recognized Isaiah 53 as referring to the Messiah. Here is the explanation of Isaiah 53 in the *Targum Jonathan*. “but it was the Lord’s good pleasure to forgive the transgressions of us all for his sake. … they shall look upon the kingdom of their Anointed One (or, Messiah), they shall multiply sons and daughters… and the rebellious shall be forgiven for his sake.” See *The New Testament Background* p.314-315 for more info. In later times, the *Tractate Sanhedrin* and *Talmud Bavli* also mention this. (*Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* vol.2 p.224,307). In the Middle Ages, the Jew Nachmanides, in his debate with a Catholic, said that Isaiah 53 referred to the Messiah, but claimed that the Messiah was willing to die, but did not actually die. (*Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* vol.2 p.226).

As for Psalm 22 the Medieval Jewish *Pesikta Rabbati* 37:2, written about 845 A.D., says that Psalm 22 refers to the Messiah. (*Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* vol.2 p.230,309).

**Q-6:** Matthew and Luke both say Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but they have contradictory plot devices *Jesus, Interrupted* p.235-236. also in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.30.

**A-6:** Again, Ehrman does not understand complementary is not necessarily contradictory. For example, if one writer says A and B happened, and another writer says A and C happened, it could be possible that A, B, and C all happened.

Matthew and Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ birth can be completely reconciled. Here is a harmony of all the gospels relating to Jesus’ birth. It is important to distinguish between what is said to be order versus what may be in order. For these events, numbers refer to events that must follow preceding numbers. Letters such as a,b,c refer to events that could happen in any order. Markers of location, time, and sequence found in the gospels are in bold.

B1a. **In the beginning**, Jesus pre-existed in Heaven. Jn 1:1-5; Jn 17:5

B1b. Mary’s genealogy from Adam (with gaps). Lk 3:23-37

B1c. Joseph’s genealogy from Abraham (with gaps). Mt 1:1-17

B2. **In Jerusalem**, **while Herod ruled (37 B.C. to 4 B.C.)**, Gabriel visits Zechariah; Elizabeth will be expecting. Lk 1:1-25

B3. **In Elizabeth’s 6th month**, Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth, telling her she will be with child. Lk 1:26-38

B4. Mary is pregnant, though still a virgin. Mt 1:18-19

B5. **After Mary is pregnant**, Gabriel visits Joseph. Mt 1:20-25

B6. **Traveling to Judea**, Mary visits Elizabeth. Lk 1:39-56

B7. John the Baptist is born. Lk 1:57-80

B8. **While Herod was king (37-4 B.C.)**, Christ is born in Bethlehem of Judea. Mt 2:1; Lk 2:1-7

B9. **In nearby fields**, angels tell shepherds to visit Jesus. Lk 2:8-20

B10a1. **On the 8th day**, Jesus is circumcised. Lk 2:21

B10a2. **After Mary’s purification (33 days later according to Lev 12:1-4),** **at the temple in Jerusalem**, Jesus is presented to the Lord. Lk 2:22-38

B10b. **In a house in Bethlehem,** Magi from the east come to worship Jesus. Mt 2:2-12

B11. **After the Magi left**, the flight to Egypt. Mt 2:13-15

B12. **Within 2 years**, Herod kills the male babies of Bethlehem. Mt 2:16-18

B13. **After Herod died**, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return to Nazareth. Mt 2:19-22; Lk 2:40a

B14a. **In Nazareth of Galilee**, Jesus grows up. Mt 2:23; Lk 2:40b

**Q-7:** Ehrman says that Isaiah 7:14 has to mean “young maiden” and cannot mean “virgin”, but was rendered as virgin (*parthenos*) in the Greek Septuagint (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.74).

**A-7:** Obviously the Jewish-speaking translators of the Septuagint, prior to Christ, understood Hebrew differently than Bart Ehrman. This Hebrew word was the ideal word for this passage because many prophecies have a dual fulfillment. The prophecy was given in 735 B.C., and the first fulfillment was when Syria was destroyed in 732 B.C..

In particular Isaiah 7:14-16 uses a Hebrew word *almah* that can be translated “young maiden” or “virgin”; it is the same word used of the child Miriam, who was both, in Exodus 2:8.

The Hebrew word *betulah* (similar to the Akkadian word *batultu*) does not only mean virgin either. *betulah* means a woman who is married in Joel 1:8, Jeremiah 25 multiple times.

Also, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* p.300-302 has three telling points

**a)** “you” is plural. This means the sign is for the entire house of David, not just Ahaz.

**b)** The word *'almah* can refer to either a young maiden or a virgin, but there is not a single instance where it means a married woman.

**c)** The definite article before *'almah* (*ha'almah*) should make this be translated as “the virgin/young maiden”.

By the way, this prophecy could not refer to the birth of king Hezekiah, because Hezekiah would be about ten years old at the time of this prophecy.

**Q-8:** If Jesus was born of a virgin, Ehrman asks why Matthew and [allegedly] Luke trace Jesus’ bloodline through Joseph (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.35,36). He says that saying Luke’s genealogy is of Mary is wrong because Luke 1:23 (like Matthew 1:16) says this is of Joseph. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.37

**A-8:** While Jesus was biologically related to David through Mary, relationship only through the mother would not give someone the right to rule on the throne of their ancestor. That is why Jesus needed to be the adopted son of Joseph too.

Matthew records Jesus’ genealogy of “law”, i.e. his adopted father, Joseph. Luke records the genealogy of “nature”, i.e. the biological genealogy of Mary. Genealogies of women were not generally known in the ancient world, and Luke was breaking new ground in putting this ancestry here.

Justin Martyr (wrote 135-165 A.D.) “For we know that the fathers of women are the fathers likewise of those children whom their daughters bear” in *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* ch.100 p.249

Julius Africanus (232-245 A.D.) in his *Letter to Aristides* (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol.6 p.125-127) also differentiated between genealogies of law and nature. However, he said one was a biological genealogy of Joseph and the other the natural genealogy of Joseph. See also *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History* book 1 ch.7 and book 6 ch. 31.

It is somewhat surprising that Ehrman does not bring up Jeremiah 22:28-30 and 36:30. God said that Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and his father Jehoiakim were both cursed by God, in that neither of these men would have any descendent on the throne of David. How could Jesus possibly be the Messiah, destined to rule forever on the throne of David, if he descended through either of these men?

The genealogy of Joseph in Matthew does in fact show that Joseph was descended from an accursed line. This would be a real problem, if Joseph were the biological father, because Jeremiah prophesied that Jehoiachin would have no descendents on the throne. However, the genealogy of Mary in Luke diverges after David, and shows that Jesus was NOT biologically descended from Jeconiah and Jehoiakim, Looking back, we can see that David and Solomon were given slightly different promises. Only Joseph was descended from Solomon, and both Joseph and Mary were descended from David.

Historically Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul, answered this objection to Joseph’s genealogy in Matthew in *Irenaeus Against Heresies* book 3 ch.21.9 p.453-454, written 182-188 A.D..

**Q-9:** Ehrman objects to Matthew dividing the generations into three groups of 14, because Matthew did not list some names (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.37-38).

**A-9:** Matthew chose not to list some names, but that is not a problem. The Jews understood Father also to mean ancestor (as in Acts 7:19; 1 Kings 15:24; 22:50; 2 Kings 15:38), just as son also meant descendent.

**Q-10:** Why did Matthew only list 41 generations from Abraham, while Luke listed 57? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.38).

**A-10:** While some fathers had sons when they were young and some when they were older, there is a more significant reason. Matthew (and probably Luke too) passed over some names. This is not a problem, since father can mean ancestor, as son can mean descendent, and neither author claimed they included all the names.

Perhaps Matthew did not name more than 14 generations after the exile because Matthew did not know the other names, and he only wrote of what he knew.

**Q-11:** Bart Ehrman points out that if you add up the three sets of 14 names in Matthew’s genealogy, you do not get 3 x 14 = 42 names, but only 41 names (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.37-38).

**A-11:** There are three sets of 14 names, but they are not additive, David ends the first and starts the second. Now we might have a problem if Matthew had claimed there were 42 generations, but Matthew never said the sum was 42. Matthew presumably mentioned in passing three sets of 14 names as a memory device.

**Q-12:** Ehrman writes, “For one thing, we have relatively good records for the reign of Caesar Augustus, and there is no mention anywhere in any of them of an empire-wide census for which everyone had to register by returning to their ancestral home. How could such a thing even be imagined? Jesus returns to Bethlehem because his ancestor David was born there. But David lived a thousand years before Joseph. Are we to imagine that everyone in the Roman Empire was required to return to the homes of their ancestors from a thousand years earlier?” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.32-33)

**A-12:** Bart Ehrman probably had not heard of Vibius Maximus, Roman prefect of Egypt in 104 A.D., His taxation edict required everyone in the Egypt to return their hometown. This would not cause chaos for the farmers and poorer people, who did not travel much anyway. See *The Case for Christ* p.135 and the *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* p.414 for more info, and it says the decree is documented in Deiss LAE p.271.

As to Joseph returning to Bethlehem vs. calling Nazareth his home town, Luke did not actually claim that Caesar Augustus required everyone in the Empire return to their “ancestral home”, only their “own city”. Perhaps Joseph had his own reasons, and Joseph either thought it important to register himself as a descendant of the royal line on his own accord, or else he was told to do so by an angel. However, Joseph was not the only one who saw the need to travel for the census, as the inns in Bethlehem were full.

**Q-13:** Ehrman writers, “If the Gospels are right that Jesus’ birth occurred during Herod’s reign, then Luke cannot also be right that it happened when Quirinius was the governor of Syria. We know from a range of other historical sources, including the Roman historian Tacitus, the Jewish historian Josephus, and several ancient inscriptions, that Quirinius did not become governor of Syria until 6 CE, ten years after the death of Herod. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.33-34

**A-13:** An inscription shows that Quirinius was governor of Syria starting in 6 A.D., which all agree was too late for Jesus’ birth. However, this was Quirinius’ second time as a governor. The first time was between 12 and 6 B.C., when he led a campaign against the Homanadensians in Anatolia (modern Turkey).

Sir William Ramsay advocated that Quirinius was governor of Syria the first time. (Syria is adjacent to the mountains of Anatolia). While we have a complete record of the governors of Syria during this time and Quirinius is not mentioned until 6 A.D., Quirinius might have been a special, additional governor for this military campaign.

F.F. Bruce advocated that Quirinius was governor of probably Galatia. Galatia is in Anatolia. In his *The New Testament Documents : Are They Reliable?*, (IVP) p.86-87 F.F. Bruce mentions that many grammarians translate Luke 2:2 as “before” Quirinius was governor of Syria, not “while”.

Tertullian (198-220 A.D.) in *Against Marcion* 4:19 says that the name “Quirinius” was substituted for “Saturninus”. Historically, we know that Saturninus was governor of Syria from 8 to 6 B.C.

As a side note, there is much about the ancient world we cannot prove. For example, Damascus coins are silent about Roman occupation of Damascus between 34 to 62 A.D. Yet, we are certain that the Romans ruled Damascus then.

**Q-14:** Ehrman says that in John Jesus does not preach the coming kingdom of God, never tells a parable, casts out a demon. There is no Transfiguration, he does not cleanse the temple at the end. He does not have the Lord’s supper, washing His disciple’s feet instead. He does not have any official trial before Jewish leaders. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.72)

**A-14:** Two points to consider in the answer.

1) The gospel writers had their own perspectives, to best teach others about Jesus’ life.

2) Ehrman agrees with other scholars that John was written about 90 to 95 CE. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.81, *Lost Christianities* p.19-20). It was the last gospel written. One likely reason John is more different than the other gospels are from each other is that he knew what they had written and did not see a need to repeat it.

**Q-15:** Ehrman asks how a star could guide the wise men, and “stop” over Jerusalem, move again, and stop at Bethlehem over the house where Jesus was born? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.32)

**A-15:** Two points to consider in the answer.

1) It never said the star guided them to Jerusalem (though it could have). The Magi were astrologers, and the appearance of a star in the sky could have been in a constellation they associated with the Jews.

2) Luke 2:9 says that the star went before them to Bethlehem, stopping over the house. At this point, what appeared to them as a star could have been the glory of an angel. When the angel appears to the shepherds, the glory of the Lord shone around them in Luke 2:9 (NKJV).

3) Finally, the Magi might have known the general timing of the birth of the Messiah because Daniel prophesied it in Daniel 9:24-26, and because Daniel in his time was an administrator in the Persian Empire.

**Q-16:** In Luke 2:7 why did the wise men came to Jesus’ house in Bethlehem (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.34)

**A-16:** Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room at the inn. Obviously, Joseph and Mary would not want to remain living in a stable any longer than needed. They moved to a house by the time the Magi came.

Modern western Christmas songs generally present the Magi as coming the very night Jesus was born. Actually it was some time after that they came. Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas December 25th, but celebrate the Magi coming in mid-January.

**Q-17:** Ehrman writes that there is no historical account of King Herod slaughtering the children (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.32).

**A-17:** There many things that we would not know happened, or how they happened, except with a single historical record. For example, we have no record of the Romans conquering Gaul, or how they conquered Gaul – except for the writings of Julius Caesar. In this case, apart from the Bible, other writers who mention Herod slaughtering the little children are in many other early Christian writings.

**Justin Martyr** in *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew* ch.78 p.238 (c.138-165 A.D.) mentions that Magi visiting Herod, and Herod massacring all the children in Bethlehem.

Tatian’s ***Diatessaron*** quotes Luke 2 and the killing of the baby boys in Bethlehem.

Hegesippus (170-180 A.D.) (partial) said that Herod dreaded the advent of Christ *Five Books of Commentaries on the Acts of the Church* section 1 Concerning the Relatives of our Savior p.763

**Irenaeus of Lyons** (182-188 A.D.) says that [God] “removed those children belonging to the house of David, whose happy lot it was to have been born at that time, that He might send them on before into His kingdom” *Irenaeus Against Heresies* book 3 ch.16.4 p.442

Irenaeus of Lyons (182-188 A.D.) said Jesus “fled from the persecution set on foot by Herod” *Irenaeus Against Heresies* book 3 ch.21.3 p.452

Tertullian (198-220 A.D.) (partial, does not mention babies being killed) “means this: that they should not walk in their ancient path. Not that Herod should not pursue them, who in fact did not pursue them;” *On Idolatry* ch.9 p.66

**Origen** (225-253/254 A.D.) says that Herod slew all the infants in Bethlehem and surrounding areas hoping to kill the King of the Jews. *Origen Against Celsus* book 1 ch.61 p.423

**Cyprian of Carthage** (c.246-258 A.D.) (implied, no mention of Herod) mentions that at Christ’s birth infants two years old and under were killed for Christ. *Epistles of Cyprian* letter 55 ch.6 p.349

**Archelaus** (262-278 A.D.) says that at the time of Jesus Herod killed “every [infant] male among the Jews.” *Disputation with Manes* ch.44 p.220

**Peter of Alexandria** (306,285-311 A.D.) mentions the infants Herod slaughtered because of Christ. *Canonical Epistle* Canon 13 p.277

The heretical Ebionite ***Protoevangelium of James*** ch.21-22 vol.8 p.366 also mentions that after the wise men were warned and left for their own country, Herod sent murderers to slay the children.

Slaughtering the children “as a protective measure” is very consistent with what we know of Herod’s character, however. In his 36 years of reign, Herod executed or had assassinated his wife Mariamne, and two husbands of his sister Salome. Herod had his brother-in-law drowned in the Jordan, and his mother-in-law Alexandra killed. He killed Hyrcanus, the last of the Hasmonean Dynasty. He killed many Pharisees and many noble families. The Jewish rabbis Jehuda ben Saripha and Mattathias ben Margoloth were burned alive. He had his sons Alexander and Aristobulus killed. Since Herod, like most Jews, did not eat pork, this prompted the Roman Emperor to quip that he would rather be Herod’s pig than his son. Five days before Herod died, he had his son Antipater killed. There is no question that Herod had the brutal capability to kill the infants, and given all the other “news” Herod brought, killing infants in a small town might seem less newsworthy.

**Q-18:** Ehrman does believe that Jesus was from Nazareth (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.154), but he asks that if in Matthew they escaped to Egypt, how could they return directly to Nazareth in Luke? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.34, *Lost Christianities* p.169)

**A-18:** Luke 2:39 does not say Jesus’ family immediately returned to Nazareth. It only says that they performed what the law required [in Jerusalem] before returning to Nazareth. One could infer that this happened right after because nothing else was mentioned. Perhaps Luke did not see a need to mention the trip to Egypt, or perhaps Luke was unaware of the trip to Egypt.

Either way, it is not incompatible with the other gospels. Here is a detailed harmony (same as given earlier). Letters such as a,b,c refer to events that could happen in any order.

B8. **While Herod was king (37-4 B.C.)**, Christ is born in Bethlehem of Judea. Mt 2:1; Lk 2:1-7

B9. **In nearby fields**, angels tell shepherds to visit Jesus. Lk 2:8-20

B10a1. **On the 8th day**, Jesus is circumcised. Lk 2:21

B10a2. **After Mary’s purification (33 days later according to Lev 12:1-4),** **at the temple in Jerusalem**, Jesus is presented to the Lord. Lk 2:22-38

B10b. **In a house in Bethlehem,** Magi from the east come to worship Jesus. Mt 2:2-12

B11. **After the Magi left**, the flight to Egypt. Mt 2:13-15

B12. **Within 2 years**, Herod kills the male babies of Bethlehem. Mt 2:16-18

B13. **After Herod died**, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return to Nazareth. Mt 2:19-22; Lk 2:40a

B14a. **In Nazareth of Galilee**, Jesus grows up. Mt 2:23; Lk 2:40b

**Q-19:** At Jesus’ baptism did the voice speak to the people around Jesus in Matthew or just to Jesus (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.39-40). In Matthew 3:17 the Father says, “This is my Son…” and in Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22 the Father says, “You are my Son….”

**A-19:** On one hand, the Father could have spoken twice, once to the people, and once, audibly or inaudibly, to Jesus. On the other hand, the Father could have simply spoken only one sentence. In numerous places the gospel writers do not give exact quotes, but the gist or meaning of what was communicated. It is easy to forget that modern quotation marks were unknown in ancient writing. Regardless, it is clear from all three writers that the Father communicated that Jesus was His beloved Son, in whom He was well-pleased.

**Q-20:** Why was Jesus tempted by the devil in the synoptic gospels but not John? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.40)

**A-20:** Again, Ehrman has a real problem with one gospel writer giving complementary information that another gospel writer does not give. All Bible scholars I am aware of agree that John was written after the other three gospels. He preserved many discourses that are not in the other gospels, or only in them in brief form. John was likely aware of the other gospels, and often did not repeat some of the things already found in the other gospels.

**Q-21:** Ehrman says that turning water to wine “was the first sign that Jesus did” (John 2:11). Healing the centurion’s son is the second sign in John 4:54. Yet, Jesus did many signs in John 2:23. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.8-9

**A-21:** First what is not the answer, and then the answer.

**Not the answer:** John did not explicitly show that John 2:23 was chronological with what was before and after it. However, it most likely is chronological.

**The answer:** John could not have intended this as the second sign overall, because of John 4:45: “The Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there.” (NIV). John 4:54 does not just say this was the second sign; rather, it was “the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.”

John numbering the first two Galilean miracles shows it is all the more galling that many Galileans rejected Jesus. In contrast, even the Samaritans believed in Jesus without any miracle. But the Galileans later tried to stone Jesus even after these miracles were done there. *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* vol.1 p.735 and the *Believer’s Bible Commentary* p.1488,1489 also say this is the second sign in Galilee.

**Q-22:** Did Jesus cleanse the temple in the last week in Mark 11, or at the beginning of his ministry in John 2? “Some readers have thought that Jesus must have cleansed the Temple twice, once at the beginning of his ministry and once at the end. But that would mean that neither Mark nor John tells the ‘true’ story, since in both accounts he cleanses the temple only once. Moreover, is this reconciliation of the two accounts historically plausible? If Jesus made a disruption in the temple at the beginning of his ministry, why wasn’t he arrested by the authorities then?” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.7. also in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.22

**A-22:** There were two cleansings; certainly Jesus would not have cleansed the temple once, and then when He came three years later pass by in silence. The first time was accompanied by sign and wonders, so Jesus would have been hard to arrest without arousing the people. Even the second time, the authorities would not arrest Jesus, - unless they could find Him apart from the crowds, such as at night.

**Q-23:** Ehrman mentions that in conversation with Nicodemus in Jn 3:1-21, Jesus uses a Greek double entendre (play on words): “from above” and “second time” would be different in Aramaic. Ehrman does not believe that Jesus could speak Greek.

**A-23:** Nazareth, where Jesus was raised, was only 15 to 20 miles from non-Jewish, Greek-speaking people in the west, north, or east. Galilean coins typically had Greek on them. East of Galilee was a region they call “The “Decapolis”, which is Greek for “ten-cities”. Nicodemus comes from *nike* and *demos*. This does NOT mean a non-Republican voter wearing athletic shoes! Rather, it is a Greek name, meaning “victor of the people.” Now suppose for sake of argument that someone with a traditional Greek-name, talking with someone from a small region surrounded on three sides by Greek-speaking people, decided to converse in Aramaic, or Hebrew, or even some other language besides Greek. Now suppose that even though both would have knowledge of Greek, they would not even say a single sentence in that language. If the original meaning were “born again” and not a double entendre with “born from above”, the passage would still make perfect sense if there were no double entendre.

Also, if they did not speak Greek, why would Peter and Andrew’s mother name her son Andrew, which is a Greek name meaning “manly”.

**Q-24:** Ehrman points out that in Jn 13:36 Peter asks Jesus, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ In John 14:5 Thomas says, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Yet Jesus said that no one asked Him, ‘where are you going?’ (John 16:5).

**A-24:** First a fact not a part of the answer, and then the answer.

**Not a part of the answer:** Technically Thomas’ statement was not concerning where Jesus was going, but only how the disciples could know the way. But this is a moot point because Peter asked this question.

**The answer,** **sequence of Jesus’ teaching and Greek verb tense:** Peter’s question was asked before Jesus gave the long discourse that He was the way, the truth, and the life, and that Jesus was sending the Holy Spirit. After Jesus explained these things, Jesus then apparently thought someone might ask where Jesus was going, since He was the Way and would send the Holy Spirit, but no one asked that.

When Peter and Thomas first asked their questions, Jesus could not give them a complete answer without them first knowing Jesus’ role as the way, truth, and life and introducing the Holy Spirit. After this, then Jesus asks, “yet, not one of you is asking me (note the tense) where are you departing?” per the Wuest Expanded Translation.

**Q-25:** When Jairus’ servants come to Jesus, was his daughter sick in Mark 5:22 and Lk 8:42, or had she already died in Matthew 9:18-26. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.41; *Lost Christianities* p.170)

**A-25:** First two things that are probably not the answer, and then the likely answer.

**Not the answer: coma is like death**

The breathing of a person in a coma is very shallow, and it is difficult to tell when they had died. However, this is probably not the correct answer because Jairus had left some time ago, and someone in a coma would still be somewhat warm. Finally, Jairus’ friends later telling him his daughter finally died would go against this.

**Probably not the answer: Jairus said all three**

Jairus himself was not sure if his daughter was still alive when he talked to Jesus, or if she had already passed away while he journeyed to Jesus. So Jairus might have at one point said she had died, and at another point said she was at the last end, and at another point said she was dying. However, in all three gospels, Jairus said the words in question to Jesus, and while he might have repeated his request to Jesus three times, using three different wording, the next answer is more probable.

**The answer: Gospel writers paraphrased**

In other places in the gospels dialogues are paraphrases, not exact quotes, and focusing on the main points with details left out. For example, when people came all day to hear Jesus’ teaching, yet we can read the account in only five minutes, what did they do for the rest of the time? As John 21:25 says, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen” (NKJV)

Consider this: it only takes about three seconds to read what Jairus said in any one account. When Jairus came, did he only speak three seconds to Jesus, and then was silent? – of course we do not think that. But that means that each gospel writer chose to leave out many extraneous details and simply wanted to record the main point Jairus had. Whichever phrase Jairus used, and he may have used more than one, his beloved daughter was passing the end of her life.

**Q-26:** Ehrman writes, “Some sayings of Jesus are rendered in similar but nevertheless diverging ways. One of my favorite examples of this phenomenon is the pair of saying related in Matthew 12:30 and Mark 9:40. In Matthew, Jesus declares, ‘Whoever is not with me is against me.’ In Mark, he says, ‘Whoever is not against us is for us.’ Did he say both things? Could he mean both things? How can both be true at once? Or is it possible that one of the Gospel writers got things switched around?” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.41

**A-26:** Quite frankly, I am at a total loss as to how Ehrman could see this as a contradiction. In Matthew 12:22-37 (corresponding with Mark 3:20-29), this occurs when Jesus is brought a demon-possessed man. Much later, on a totally different occasion, in Mark 9:38-41 Jesus is told about someone else driving out demons. So of course Jesus could say different things on different days. Perhaps Ehrman somehow thought it contradictory that if someone were against Jesus they could also be against His followers, or vice versa. But Jesus predicted that His followers will be persecuted and killed because the persecutors do not know the Father or Jesus in John 16:3. Jesus stated in John 15:18-21, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his maters.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name.” Jesus identified Himself closely with His followers in Matthew 25:34-46 in the parable of the sheep and the goats. In John 15:1-8 Jesus says we are in Him as branches are connected to a vine.

See also the next questions for some of the sayings of Bart Ehrman are said in similar, but divergent ways: p.103 and p.84 of *Jesus Interrupted*.

**Q-27:** Ehrman writes, “In Matthew, Jesus refuses to perform miracles in order to prove his identity; in John, that is practically the only reason he does miracles.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.103

In Matthew, in the second temptation and elsewhere, Jesus will perform no signs to prove himself. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.84

**A-27:** Ehrman equates not obeying the word of Satan or the skeptical Pharisees with performing signs for people looking for answers, or needing help. Jesus said the reason He did not throw Himself down was that one should not put God to the test in Matthew 4:7. Jesus did not “owe” it to anybody to perform a single sign; and he never performed signs to skeptical people who thought Jesus owed them that. But Jesus graciously performed signs to people who had faith and strengthened their faith.

**Q-28:** In Mark 8:38 Ehrman makes the point that Jesus does not explicitly identify Himself as the Son of Man. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.159)

**A-28:** Jesus did not have to. Jesus already identified Himself as the Son of Man in Mark 2:5-12. Jesus said, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’ - He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’”

**Q-29:** Ehrman says that Jesus was apocalyptic (focusing on the endtimes) in Mark, but not John *Jesus, Interrupted* p.81

**A-29:** Jesus was apocalyptic (spoke of the end times), in three gospels: Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 17:20-37. It is generally acknowledged that John was written later than the other gospels. John is about the same length as the other gospels. He provides a lot of detail on the discourses that are not in the other gospels, but he apparently did not see a need to repeat what other gospels already spelled out quite clearly. Of course, the book with the most apocalyptic material in the Bible is not a gospel, but the book of Revelation, written down by John.

**Q-30:** Ehrman says that Jesus’ teachings on the end times (Mk 9:1; 13:30, etc.) did not come to pass. *Lost Christianities* p.118

**A-30:** the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem came to pass in one generation (40 years). However, the endtimes prophecies have not come to pass yet, as the endtimes have not come yet.

**Q-31:** Mark with his use of “immediately” gives the impression that Jesus’ ministry lasted only a few months, from picking grain during the harvest in Mark 2 to the Passover in ch.11. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.42

**A-31:** I have read all of the preserved pre-Nicene Christian and heretical literature, and I did not find a single writer, Christian, or heretic, who thought Mark indicated that Jesus’ ministry lasted only a few months. Scholars should be careful not to read their own innovative theories into ancient writings. I am sure different people can find all kinds of impressions in the Bible if they work hard enough.

**Q-32:** Ehrman thinks Jesus that the Last Supper was the Friday Passover in Mark 14:12,22; 15:25 (having Jesus die on Saturday), but the Last Supper was the day before the Passover mean according to John 19:14 (*Lost Christianities* p.169). He says in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.27, “I do not think this is a difference that can be reconciled.”

**A-32:** This can be reconciled quite simply. The crucifixion was after “their Passover” meal, but before the Passover meal of most Jews. Since Jesus knew He would be “unavailable” on Friday, He then chose to celebrate the Passover meal a day early. For proof of this, let’s look again at Mark, which Ehrman falsely believes teaches the Last Supper was Friday.

Mark clearly shows Jesus’ death was before Friday sundown; though not in Mark 14. Mark 14 says the disciples made preparations for the day the lamb was sacrificed; but does not specify the night of the meal in that chapter. However Mark is crystal clear, in Mark 15:42 that Jesus died on the Day of Preparation, that is, prior to the start of the Sabbath on Friday evening. It says after Jesus died, “Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,” (NKJV)

**Q-33:** For Mark 15:42 Ehrman says, “Mark tells us what he means by this phrase: it is the Day of Preparation ‘for the Sabbath’ (*not* the Day of Preparation for the Passover).” (italics in the original) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.27

**A-33:** There are two likely but different answers.

**Sabbath and may have Passover coincided that year:** Ehrman does not seem to consider that the Passover and Sabbath coincide in some years. There is some uncertainty about exact dates back then, but many think the Passover and a Saturday Sabbath would coincide in A.D. 30 or A.D. 33.

**High Sabbaths:** Every Saturday was a Sabbath, but not every Sabbath was a Saturday, as Leviticus 23:39 proves. Both the first and eighth day of the seventh month should be a “Sabbath rest”. There were “no-work days” every year, but they would not be Saturdays most of the time. The Passover was the first day of the Feast of unleavened bread, and both the first and seventh days of the Feast were “no-work days” according to Exodus 12:16.

John 19:31 would settle which of the two answers was the correct one, except that it could be used to support both answers. It says, “…for that Sabbath was a high day”. But since it was a high day, it was not necessary that it be a Saturday.

**Q-34:** Ehrman thinks there is a discrepancy on the time when Jesus was crucified. Was it the 3rd hour (9 in the morning) as in Mark 15:25, or as John 19:14-15 says the 6th hour, 12 noon [allegedly]? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.27)

A-34: First a fact that is not a part of the answer, and then the answer.

A fact not a part of the answer: The Greek way of writing three and six differed by only one stroke, so one conjecture is that it was a scribal error. However, there is a simpler explanation.

The answer: Mark used the Jewish day which began at 6:00 am., so Jesus was crucified about 9:00 a.m. John does not say when Jesus was crucified, but rather when the trial began. John, writing primarily to Gentile readers, used the Roman day in John 1:39; 4:6; 19:14), which started at midnight, so again, the trial started about 6:00 a.m.

**Q-35:** When the women go to the tomb, do they see a man (Mark), two men (Luke), or an angel (Matthew). “this is normally reconciled by saying that the woman *actually* saw ‘two angels.’ … The problem is that this kind of reconciling again requires one to assert that what really happened is unlike what *any* of the Gospels say – since none of the three accounts states that the women say ‘two angels.’” (italics in the original) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.8

**A-35:** Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke tell us all the details of Jesus’ life. John 21:25 even tells us he left out many other things. The verses in the gospels do not contradict each other, but we need all four gospels to have a more complete picture. Ehrman is wrong in saying it is unlike what any gospels say, rather it is like what all the gospels say. It would be a mistake to think we should focus, follow, or worship the Jesus of just Matthew, or the Jesus of just Mark, etc. Rather it is Jesus Himself we want to focus, follow, and worship, and the more complete “stereophonic” picture the better.

**Q-36:** Ehrman asks in the triumphal entry did Jesus ride one animal or two? *Jesus, Interrupted* p.50

**A-36:** First a fact that is not a part of the answer, and then the answer.

**Not a part of the answer:** Some have wondered if it was one animal or two, since the Greek word *kai* can mean “and” or “even/namely”. The Hebrew word in Zechariah 9:9 also means either “and” or “or”. See as Arndt in *Bible Difficulties and Seeming Contradictions* p.180 for more on this. However, it is two, because in the triumphal entry, Matthew 11:4-7 says the mother and colt were both there.

**The answer:** The colt must have been fairly young because it had never been ridden before. They apparently did not separate the mother from the colt, but brought the mother along too. From a natural standpoint people would do that to calm the young animal. If it was with its mother, and the mother was not concerned colt that the colt was being ridden, then the colt would not be concerned either. See *Hard Sayings of the Bible* p.484-485 for more info.

Outside of the Bible, Justin Martyr (writing about 138-165 A.D.) also mentions bringing the mother donkey along with the colt in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* chapter 53 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol.1 p.222).

**Q-37:** Ehrman claims that Jesus taught the disciples that the coming would be in their own lifetimes. (Mk 9:1,30) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.160

**A-37:** In Mark 9:30, as well as Matthew 24:34 and Lk 21:32, the word can mean race as well as generation. **b)** The Greek word for generation, *genea* itself can imply race. According to Thayer’s *Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, (p.112), *genea* meant:

**b1)** men of the same stock, or a family: Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 51.1 (written about 93-94 A.D.), Septuagint Genesis 31:3, etc.

**b2)** successive descendents: Philo

**b3)** an age: Herodotus 2,132, Heraclitus in Plutarch, Acts 14:16.

Also, there is only a one-letter difference between this Greek word, and another Greek word that can only mean race, *gonea*, so this might be a typographical error.

Jerusalem was destroyed within 40 years after this prophecy was given. However, the Jewish race will not pass away until Christ’s kingdom is completely fulfilled.

**Q-38:** Ehrman falsely claims Jesus said in Mt 19:28 and Lk 22:28-30 that the twelve disciples would have twelve thrones. What about the disciple Judas Iscariot? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.159)

**A-38:** No. First of all, Luke 22:28-30 does not mention twelve thrones, only twelve tribes. Second, Matthew 19:28 does NOT exactly say the twelve disciples will sit on twelve thrones. Rather, it says, “… you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (NIV) So it says there will be twelve thrones, but does not say the twelve disciples will sit on them. Rather, Jesus only promised this to “you who have followed me.” Judas did not continue to follow Jesus and deserted his place as a disciple after betraying Jesus, as Acts 1:20 says. In Matthew 19:28, Jesus only promised this to “you who have followed me.”

**Q-39:** Ehrman writes that in Matthew 26:14 Judas betrayed Jesus for the money, while in Luke 22:3 Judas did it because Satan entered into him. In John Judas is called a devil, so apparently he had an evil streak. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.45-46

**A-39:** Just as no fire starts from only one cause, but three (air, fuel, spark), many actions too have multiple simultaneous causes. Many things have three causes: a potential cause, such as water behind a dam, an immediate cause, such as a crack in the dam, and a preventative cause that was taken out of the way, such as stopping safety inspections of a dam. Which one caused the dam to break? – all three were involved. Likewise Judas was already a thief before this, so he was devilish. Judas was given an additional selfish motive, of the bribe from the priests. Finally, he saw the opportunity after the Last Supper. Which was the reason Judas betrayed Jesus? – all three were involved.

**Q-40:** Ehrman claims that in Mark Jesus had a quick trial where Jesus said almost nothing, but a long, delayed trial in John where Jesus had sustained conversations (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.43).

**A-40:** This is rather silly because neither Mark nor John say how long the dialogue was, and Jesus probably said more things than either one records. There were not one but two trials (Jewish and Roman). Mark recorded two sentences Jesus spoke in the Jewish trial and 1 sentence in the Roman trial. John recorded 5 sentences of Jesus in talking in the Jewish trial, and 9 sentences in the Roman trial. A mere 14 sentences should not count as proof of a long (or short) trial in Ehrman’s eyes. But again, neither gospel writer claims to record everything Jesus said.

**Q-41:** In John 18:12-19:16, Ehrman asks why Jesus was flogged in the middle of the trial, not after it was over. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.44)

**A-41:** First of all there were not one, but two trials, Jewish and Roman, and it what Pilate thought would be the end of the Roman trial. After Pilate made up his mind John 19:6 explains what Pilate did, and John 19:12 explains why. Pilate knew the Jews wanted Jesus dead, but Pilate was trying to set Jesus free. He ordered Jesus beaten, then he displayed Jesus, bloodied, to the crowds, hoping that they would be satisfied with that. But the crowds insisted on death, and brought up an argument Pilate had not anticipated: Jesus called Himself a king, and if Pilate let a self-proclaimed king go, it would look very, very bad for Pilate. Thus Pilate had no choice; to pronounce Jesus not deserving of death, would be bad for Pilate if word back to the suspicious Emperor Tiberius that Pilate was soft on traitors to Rome.

But Ehrman has the false assumption that ancient trials had to be fair, or had to follow modern standards. As an example, in 738/739 A.D. in a trial in Iraq group of men were accused of not returning money belonging to another. They were made to take an oath that they did not do that, then they were flogged, then the caliph was informed of their situation. The judgment was that they should take an oath and then be released [as innocent]. See the *History of al-Tabari* vol. 26 p.7 for more info.

A second example was in 743/744 A.D., the caliph al-Walid ordered his guard to beat Khalid, saying “Let me hear his voice” (i.e. in agony). Then Khalid was imprisoned until Yusuf bin ‘Umar brought money from Iraq to buy Khalid. Khalid did not want to be sold, but he did not have the money Yusuf had, so al-Walid took the money and sold Khalid. Yusuf first tortured Khalid, then later flogged Khalid, and finally killed him with a spiked rack on his chest. This is without the caliph, or anybody else, pronouncing Khalid guilty of anything. This is in *The History of al-Tabari* vol.26 p.176-177.

A third example, in the same year, Sulayman tugged so hard on Yusuf’s long beard that he pulled some of out. After that Yusuf was imprisoned in the green palace. The caliph Yazid said that he imprisoned Yusuf just so that he could be sent to Iraq and presented to the people on whom he perpetrated injustices. This is in *The History of al-Tabari* vol.26 p.203-204.

**Q-42:** In Mark 14:62 Jesus told the high priest he would see the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. But if the high priest died before Jesus returned, that would invalidate Jesus answer. So in Luke Jesus says, “I am, and from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God” (Luke 22:69) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.51

**A-42:** First what’s not the answer, and then the answer.

**Not the answer:** For some reason Ehrman did not want to bring up Matthew 26:64, where it says you (plural). However, it is a moot point, as all the Sanhedrin died before Jesus’ return.

**The answer:** Ehrman brings up two objections in one. The first objection is that the high priest (and actually all of the Sanhedrin) died before Jesus returned. The answer to that is that all the Sanhedrin, including the high priest, will see Jesus come. Revelation 1:7 promises that every eye will see Jesus when He returns, even specifically those who pierced him.

The second objection is that Luke, written after Mark appears to change from “you (singular) will see” to simply stating that Jesus would return. The key point of this His argument is weakened by a textual variant. Clement of Alexandria (193-202 A.D.) quotes Mark 14:62 with you (plural) in *Stromata* book 6 ch.52 in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol.2 p.574. We know that is it Mark and not another Gospel that Clement is quoting, because he explicitly tells us it is Mark.

**Q-43:** Ehrman says that the Temple veil ripped while Jesus is alive in Luke 23:45-46, but it rips after He died in Mark. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.68) Then he asks if the torn veil represents God rejecting the Jewish system of worship, or does it symbolize Jesus atoning for us. (also in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.52)

**A-43:** Two points to consider in the answer. 1) Of course the ripped veil can represent more than one thing, especially when the two things are closely related. It does not actually symbolize that God rejected the Jewish system of worship though; rather that the now that Jesus atoned for sins, the Jewish system of worship was over. (Indeed the temple would be destroyed within 40 years.)

2) Luke does not specify the moment the veil ripped in two. Luke 23:44-46 says there was darkness from the 6th to 9th hour, and the veil of the temple was torn in two, and Jesus cried out before dying. It does not specify the order.

**Q-44:** Ehrman thinks it significant that it is in John that Pilate declares Jesus innocent on three occasions. [Jn 18:38; 19:4,6] He says that if the Romans declared Jesus innocent, the implication is that the Jews that killed Christ. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.45)

**A-44:** Ehrman only mentions John, so it sounds like he is trying to pit the gospel writers against each other, showing that John was the one who emphasized that it was not Pilate who declared Jesus guilty. However, in Luke Pilate also declared Jesus innocent on three occasions in Luke 23:4,14,22. Matthew also did one in Matthew 27:24, and Mark did not have those statements, only implications. So if Ehrman were trying to present a balance, accurate picture, I don’t know why Ehrman would not mention Luke as much as he mentioned John.

Regardless though, it would be false to claim John “let the Romans off the hook” for Jesus’ death. John 19:1 says that Pilate and the Roman soldiers scourged Jesus and put the crown of thorns on him. John 19:23 says it was the soldiers (i.e. Roman soldiers) who crucified Jesus. It as Pilate’s soldiers that were about to break Jesus’ legs, but then pierced his side with a spear in John 19:33-34.

**Q-45:** Ehrman claims a discrepancy of the words of Jesus on the cross *Jesus, Interrupted* p.65

“The problem comes when readers take these two accounts and combine them into one overarching account, in which Jesus says, does, and experiences everything narrated in both Gospels. When that is done, the messages of both Mark and Luke get completely lost and glossed over. Jesus is no longer in deep agony as in Mark (since he is confident in Luke), and he is no longer calm and in control as in Luke (since he is in despair in Mark). He is somehow all things at once.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.69, and also p.70.

**A-45:** One of the first to show a harmony of Jesus’ life, was Tatian, who was an Encratite Gnostic who died in 172 A.D. Though he was an Encratite, his “version” of the gospel closely matches the gospels we have, except that Tatian left out the genealogies and other parts that emphasized Jesus’ humanity. It is false to say the story is unlike any of the four: rather it is like all of the four. If there were someone you wanted to study about, and you read an account of them, would you refuse to read, a second, third or fourth account? There would not be much point in reading those if they only repeated what the first account said. No, the reason you read all four accounts is to see different details, so you can form a more complete picture from the complement of what all of them remember and say. Ehrman seems to have a real problem with people putting together different accounts to know more about Jesus, and I am not sure why he has this problem.

Christians are not as interested in the message or Mark, or the message of Luke, as in the gospel of Jesus. If all of these accounts are wound together, like cords making a rope, we have a much clearer picture of the life of Jesus than just the recollections and writing of one man. The fact that told different but complementary details is a strength, not a weakness. This way, God used humans and their memories to give us Jesus’ life in four-part stereo.

**Q-46:** Ehrman writes, “The gospel of John blames ‘the Jews’ in quite graphic terms for rejecting and killing Jesus (chapters 19-20); and in one frightful passage he actually indicates that the Jews are not children of God but the children of the Devil (John 8:42-44). It’s hard to be saved if Satan is your father.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.243)

**A-46:** First see question Q-44 for a case of Ehrman unfairly blaming John. By misreferencing scripture to try to play the race card, Ehrman’s polemics lose all pretense of being unbiased. Three points in the answer.

1) John 8:42-44 says nothing about their ability to repent and be saved.

2) This speaks of their spiritual condition, not giving a biology lesson. In fact, probably almost 100% of Jesus’ followers at this point were Jewish, and the Jewish disciples were presumably saved.

3) Jesus was not speaking to all Jews; he was answering the Jews who questioned his ancestry. Today if someone called you (euphemistically) illegitimate offspring, and you responded, would it be fair to say you were speaking of every one of the accuser’s race? Ehrman is no more fair.

Finally, it is interesting to contrast Ehrman’s statement here in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.243 with his statement in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.72, where he says that unlike the other gospels, Jesus “does not have any kind of official trial before the Jewish council.” While I think John 18:12-26 indicates (though does not prove) an official trial, the point is that Ehrman does not explain why on one hand he thinks John is anti-Semitic, and on the other hand, why he thinks only the Romans and not the Jews tried Jesus in John.

**Q-47:** Ehrman writes, “It comes as a surprise to some readers to learn that this kind of anti-Judaism did not exist in the Roman, Greek, or any other world before the coming of Christianity and is therefore a Christian invention. To be sure, some Roman and Greek authors maligned the Jews for what seemed bizarre customs …. But Roman and Greek authors maligned *everyone* who was not Greek or Roman, and the Jews were not singled out. Until Christianity appeared.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.244

**A-47:** In history, indeed, this certainly would be a surprise to the Jews killed by the Seleucid Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Jews who saw the Roman Pompey desecrated the Holy of Holies in 63 B.C. It was only the Jews who were expelled from Rome (under Nero).

How much history can you get wrong and still speak with authority as a professor about history? Ehrman is wrong here in so many ways.

a) Christians were not anti-Semitic any more than they were “anti-Italian” or “anti-Greek”. Saying a religion is not correct is not being against the people. For example, there were 21 pre-Nicene Christian writers plus the *Diatessaron*, who wrote the Judaism was wrong. But there were 19 pre-Nicene Christian writers who wrote that the Greco-Roman gods were wrong. ([www.biblequery.org/History/ChurchHistory/WhatEarlyChristiansTaught.htm](http://www.biblequery.org/History/ChurchHistory/WhatEarlyChristiansTaught.htm)) Saying that somebody believes someone wrong does not mean you hate them or are prejudice against them. Ehrman says that conservative Christians are wrong. But does criticism of conservative Christians automatically mean someone must hate us? If he would deny that, then one cannot use the argument of saying the Jews believed wrong to call it prejudice.

b) There are no instances of persecution of Jews by pre-Nicene Christians. The first instance of Christians persecuting Jews was the Emperor Constantine, who non-violently closed Jewish synagogues as well as pagan temples, to encourage his subjects to go to churches instead. It apparently worked to a large degree, and some have said that Christianity has not fully recovered since.

c) Paul and the others loved the Jews. Paul says, in Romans 10:1 “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” He is much stronger, though in Romans 9:1-4a, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites,” By his example, he is showing us the love we should have for Jewish people. As for any alleged “second-class status” of Jewish people, Paul speaks against this in Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.) (NKJV)

d) There was anti-Semitism prior to the Romans.

I don’t know if Bart Ehrman is familiar with a Seleucid Emperor named Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus tried to violently stamp out Judaism, and the Maccabean revolt was the Jewish reaction to this. The book of Esther talks of the anti-Semitic Haman and the Persian people who agreed to kill the Jews.

e) There was anti-Semitism prior to Christianity. Pontius Pilate was placed in his position through the influence of his mentor, the anti-Semitic Sejanus. Sejanus was executed by Tiberius on October 9, 31 A.D.

f) There was anti-Semitism by non-Christians. A Greek named Apion wrote a book, *Against the Jews*, and Josephus’ *History* in part answered that book.

**Q-48:** Jesus’ death *Jesus, Interrupted* p.46-47

“The death of Jesus important to both Mark and Luke. But for Mark, his death is an atonement; for Luke it is the reason people realized they are sinful and need to turn to God for forgiveness. They reason for Jesus’ death, then, is quite different, depending on which author you read.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.94

**A-48:** Ehrman is trying to make a difference of belief between Mark and Luke when there is none. Even Ehrman would recognize that Luke and Acts were by the same author. Probably one of the clearest statements of the atonement made by Luke is in Acts 5:30-31: “The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.” (underline added to show where Ehrman is wrong.)

**Q-49:** Centurion says “Truly this man was the Son of God (Mark 15:39) vs. “Truly this man was innocent (Luke 23:47) These are different because a man being innocent does not of necessity mean he was the Son of God. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.52

**A-49:** The first statement implies the second; if Jesus were the Son of God, this would also imply that he was innocent. Actually though, the centurion easily could have said both.

I am fairly sure that even Ehrman would agree that during the entire six hours from when Jesus died to when they wanted to make sure he was dead, to taking His body down from the cross, the centurion had plenty of time to say more than one sentence. It would be quite odd if the centurion were totally silent except for one sentence.

**Q-50:** Who actually went to the tomb? Mary [allegedly] alone (John 20:1), Mary and another Mary (Mt 28:1), Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome (Mark 16:1) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.48

**A-50:** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James, and the other women all came. John 20:1 does NOT say Mary came alone. If a number of women came it is still accurate, though not as precise, to mention one, two or three of them. If some came earlier and some right afterward, it is still accurate for one account to say that some came, and another account to mention the entire group.

**Q-51:** Ehrman asks if the stone had already been rolled away (Mk 16:4) or was it rolled away by an angel [allegedly] when the women were there (Mt 28:2).

**A-51:** In both gospels the stone was rolled away prior to the angel talking with the women. Matthew 28:2 certainly does not say the women were present at the time the stone was rolled away.

**Q-52:** Ehrman questions if they see an angel (Mt 28:5), a young man (Mk 16:5, two men (Lk 24:4) or nothing and no one (John).

**A-52:** The angels had the appearance of men, what they saw looked like men. If there were two or more angels, then it is also correct that there was one angel. This is one of many examples where the Gospel accounts are accurate, but not precise. Ehrman has a real problem with the gospel writers not being precise, but one can tell the story glossing over some of the details.

**Q-53:** In Mt 28:8 did the women tell the disciples, or did they tell no one as Mk 16:8 says? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.48-49. also in *Lost Christianities* p.170)

**A-53:** Mark obviously did not mean the women did not tell anyone the rest of their lives. Certainly, they did not tell anyone they saw as they were fleeing from the tomb. If you read all of Matthew 28:8-10, the women ran without telling anyone yet, and then Jesus met them. Then Jesus said to tell my brothers (i.e. the disciples). If one wants to be picky, strictly speaking Matthew 28 does not actually say the women obeyed and told anyone. However, the actions of the disciples strongly imply that the women told the disciples.

**Q-54:** In Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:43-45; Lk 22:1-6; and Jn 18:2 Ehrman thinks that Judas telling the Jews where Jesus was not too significant; rather they told the Jews that Jesus considered himself king of the Jews, and they could use that to get the Romans to execute him. He admits this “is a more unusual interpretation.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.170-171

**A-54:** He is the only person I have heard of who has this novel interpretation. Ehrman is saying the Jewish leaders could have followed Jesus and snatched him up, but they did not have a strong enough charge for the Romans to convict him. What about the palm branches and the triumphal entry? They already had a charge they could make. As for following Jesus when he disappeared every night among his followers they would need a spy, someone to mingle in among the followers and report back to them. The Jewish leaders had a spy: Judas.

**Q-55:** Ehrman says, “In Jesus’ day there were lots of holy men such as Hanina ben Dosa and Honi the circle drawer. There were pagan holy men such as Apollonius of Tyana, a philosopher who could allegedly heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. He was allegedly supernaturally born and at the end of his life he allegedly ascended to heaven. Sound familiar? There were pagan demigods, such as Hercules, who could also bring back the dead.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.172

**A-55:** There was an ancient tale of Admetus and Alcestis, but nowhere in ancient literature was there anything about Hercules bringing back the dead until the playwright Euripides, in 438 B.C., in his play Alcestis, added Hercules wrestling death for Alcestis. Ehrman’s reference is based on a single reference a playwright added. There were not “lots of men”, only Hanina, Honi, and Apollonius of Tyana. Mohammed was 600 years later, and it would not be seemly for most Muslims if Jesus did miracles and Mohammed did none. So this leaves only Hanina, Honi, and Apollonius.

The only thing **Honi** did was pray for rain, and draw a circle and tell God that he would not step outside the circle until it rained. Eventually it rained.

Here are a list of **Hanini’s** miracles. While these miracles cannot be verified, even if true they in no way compared to the miracles of Jesus.

1) Hanini prayed for two sick people, one of whom had a fever, and both of them recovered.

2) Once Hanina prayed that the rain would stop and it stopped right away. When he returned home, he prayed that the rain would return, and it started raining again.

3) Hanaina and his wife had no bread, so they turned on the oven anyway so their neighbors wouldn’t know. When a neighbor came over, there miraculously was bread in the oven.

4) Hanina’s wife persuaded Hanini to ask for some of his eternal reward now, so God sent down a golden table leg. His wife then had a dream that in heaven people ate on three-legged tables, but Hanini’s only had two, so she prayed that God take back the leg, and God made it disappear.

5) A table receded from Hanini until he tithed the spices in the food.

6) Hanina’s donkey would not even eat untithed food.

7) Hanina wanted to bring a large, polished rock to Jerusalem. Five workers mysteriously appeared to carry it with him for 5 pieces of money. They instantly carried it to Jerusalem and then disappeared.

The telling thing about Hanina is that these miracles allegedly occurred during the first century A.D.. These things could have been invented by Jewish people to counter the miracles of Jesus.

We know almost nothing about **Apollonius of Tyana** except what his biographer, Flavius Philostratus wrote in c.170-c.247 A.D. He was commission to write this biography by the wife of an emperor who was trying to stamp out Christianity. Here is a brief synopsis of Apollonius’ alleged miracles.

Apollonius sees the chains of Prometheus and drives away a hobgoblin. Later in Ephesus a plague breaks out. Apollonius identifies an old beggar as the plague demon and tells the townspeople to stone him to death. He talks with Achilles’ ghost, exorcises a demon, predicts future events, and rescues a man from a female vampire. Under Nero a scroll listing the charges against Apollonius is mysteriously blanked out. He later gets the better of an Ethiopian Satyr. He cures a man of his love for a statue of Aphrodite. Later in prison under Domitian prison Apollonius miraculously shook off his fetters. After he is acquitted, Apollonius travels to Asia Minor, where he miraculously sees Domitian’s murder. He leaves this earth by ascending from a temple in Crete. Afterwards, he appears to a man in a dream, showing that souls are immortal.

Christians were persecuted under the Emperor Septimus Severus in 202 A.D. The first known British Christian martyrs were killed in 209 A.D. Philostratus was a member of the Roman Imperial court of Septimus Severus after 202 A.D., and he went with the Emperor and his wife to Britain where the emperor fought the Picts until his death in 211 A.D. The wife of Septimus Severus, Julia Domna, was his patron until she died in 217 A.D. She specifically commissioned Philostratus to write a biography of Apollonius of Tyana, who lived 150 years before. It is very probable that work was written to counter the growth of Christianity. The story is all told through the notebook of Apollonius’ disciple and constant companion Damis. All agree that this “Damis” was entirely fictional. So a biography invented to counter Christianity, told through an admitted fictional disciple; these facts were irresponsibly forgotten by Ehrman when trying to raise doubts on Jesus’ miracles.

**Q-56:** Ehrman says that one cannot historically look at miracles. Historians can only judge what is probable. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.175)

“…by definition, historians cannot establish that miracles have ever probably happened. This is true of the miracles of Mohammed, Hanina ben Dosa, Apollonius of Tyana – and Jesus.”

**A-56:** While historians might not judge the probability of a miracle, they do write about miracles, in terms of who attested them, and the effects of the report of the miracles. Take Joan of Arc for example. Regardless of what a person believes about Joan’s visions, one has to admit that their report had a profound effect on France being freed from English rule.

**Answering Objections about the Rest of the New Testament**

**Q-1:** “In this text [Acts 13:32-33] the ‘day’ Jesus became begotten as God’s son was the day of resurrection.” Then Ehrman asks how that is reconciled with Jesus being begotten in Luke 3:22. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.95)

**A-1:** It is generally agreed that both passages are by Luke, and Luke did not see any problem here. It looks like Ehrman did not read either Luke or Acts very carefully. Three points to consider in the answer.

a) Luke 3:22 does not say Jesus was begotten at His baptism, and neither does it say Jesus became God’s Son at His baptism. Rather, the Father gave the recognition that You are my Son, without specifying when this occurred.

b) Likewise Acts 13:32-33 does not say Jesus became God’s son at His resurrection either. It quotes Psalm 2, without specifying when, and then moves on to the demonstration of Jesus’ credentials by His resurrection.

c) So Ehrman is wrong about when Jesus became the Son of God, but when exactly did Jesus become the Son of God? According to Christianity Jesus was the Son of God in two distinct senses. First, he was always the Son of God, before time began. Second, the Father was the closest thing to a biological Father Jesus had, though Jesus’ body was not the product of a sexual relationship.

**Q-2:** Ehrman claims that Peter showed that Jesus received his exalted status at the resurrection in Acts 2:36 (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.95). He says that most of Paul’s letters were composed in the fifties, about ten or fifteen years before our earliest gospel. (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.85)

**A-2:** On the first part Ehrman is half-right and half-wrong. While Acts 2:36 shows Jesus’ receiving exalted status, John 17:5-7 shows that Jesus received back His exalted status that He had before the world began. We have writings of the apostolic fathers going back to 97/98 A.D. and the gospels a few decades before then. If you have ever wondered what early Christian teaching was like before the gospels were written down, we have documents showing those too: Paul’s letters.

**Q-3:** Ehrman makes the unsupported claim that Paul was an apocalyptic Jew before coming to faith in Jesus (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.87).

For Paul, the central point and key to salvation was a crucified Messiah (1 Cor 15:3-5; Rom 1-3) (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.236)

Ehrman agrees that Paul was not just making up that Jesus rose from the dead; - he knew some people who had claimed this (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.177-178). “But Paul did not make up the idea that the Messiah had to be crucified. The idea had been invented much earlier, as soon as Jesus’ original followers came to believe that God had raised him from the dead. Paul inherited this idea when he converted to become a follower of Jesus.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.236)

**A-3:** While some Jews were waiting for a Messiah, or for the end times, there is no evidence that Saul, persecutor of Jesus of Messiah, was looking for another Messiah at that time. If Ehrman seriously wanted to present Saul was looking for the end times (which would include a Messiah), he should tell us who Saul was thinking was the Messiah, or at least what Saul would allegedly say the Messiah was like.

**Q-4:** “Or, as some scholars have put it, already with Paul the religion *of* Jesus has become the religion *about* Jesus. (Although, as I have pointed out, Paul did not invent this new take on Jesus but inherited it.) (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.239)

**A-4:** Ehrman accepts that at least Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are from Paul in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.54. However, if Paul wrote about 50 A.D. the “invention” must have happened within 20 years of Jesus’ crucifixion. All generally agree that you did not have the gospels written down during this time. Instead, God guided the church through the apostles. So you had John, Peter, Matthew, and the others themselves teaching others about Jesus. It would be exciting if you had a question, instead of going to the New Testament, to go to the apostles and ask it in person.

Ehrman makes a point we agree with in saying that Paul did not “invent” any teaching of the atonement but heard it from earlier people. But with the apostles around, within 20 years of Jesus’ death, it is more likely that it was not just an “invention” but the real thing.

**Q-5:** Did Paul go directly to Jerusalem (Acts 9:19-30) or go to Arabia first (Galatians 1:16-20) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.55

**A-5:** Ehrman did not mention that Galatians 1:16-20 says Paul was in Damascus at two different times. Ehrman is assuming that Paul was let of the Damascus wall in a basket the first time he was in Damascus when it could have been the first or second time. Acts 19:26 does not specify the period of time between him fleeing Damascus and coming to Jerusalem, nor does it say which time Paul was in Damascus before he visited Jerusalem. Galatians 1:16-20 says that Paul first left Damascus for Arabia, then returned to Damascus, and then went to Jerusalem. All of this was during a period of three years.

**Q-6:** Did the churches in Judea not know Paul (Galatians 1:21-22) or did Saul persecute the churches in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-3) (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.56)

**A-6:** They would have certainly known the reputation, if not the face, of Saul of Tarsus. However, after he became a Christian (and changed his name to Paul), he was not personally known to the churches in Judea. Galatians 1:22 does NOT say the Judean churches never heard of Saul/Paul. Rather the Greek says, “I was unknown by face” (τῷ προσώπῳ) to the churches of Judea.

**Q-7:** In Acts 17:14-15 did Paul go to Athens [allegedly] alone leaving Silas and Timothy behind in Berea, or did Paul send Timothy back to Thessalonica as 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 indicates? (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.56-57)

**A-7:** There are two different responses that effectively answer this question, though I prefer the second.

**No proof of Timothy being in Athens:** 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 never said Timothy was with Paul in Athens. Rather, it only says that Paul sent Timothy. Paul could have told Timothy to go by letter, or verbally through another worker. People, then and now, delegate things to others through messages all the time.

**Timothy could have gone to Athens and then left:** Acts 17:14-15 says that Paul first went to Athens, but waited for them in Athens. So Paul went to Mars hill before Timothy and Silas came to Athens, they came to Athens, and then Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica.

So after Timothy went to Berea either

a) he went to Athens after Paul, then was told by Paul to go back to Thessalonica

b) he stayed in Berea, and was told by letter or messenger to go back to Thessalonica

c) on the way to traveling to Athens, he was told by letter or messenger to go back to Thessalonica.

This is one of the details that Acts does not tell us.

**Q-8:** Ehrman mentions doubts about an apostle’s itinerary. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.19. He is probably referring to Paul’s journeys.

**A-8:** There is no reason to doubt what Luke told us about Paul’s itinerary in Acts. On the other hand, there are many details that were left out. For example, after Paul went to Rome at the end of the book of Acts, was Paul soon crucified there, or did he travel to Spain, as he desired, and was crucified in Rome later. People can spend a lot of time discussing questions like these, but the best answer is: “the Bible does not say.”

**Q-9:** Did churches consist of Jews as well as non-Jewish Greeks (Acts 17:4) or [implicitly] just former idol worshippers (1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 12:2; Galatians 2:8).

Here is what Ehrman writes in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.58. “*Were the congregations that Paul established made up of both Jews and gentiles?* According to the book of Acts, the answer is clearly yes. When Paul preaches in Thessalonica, Jews in the synagogue come to faith in Christ, as do non-Jewish Greeks (Acts 17:4). Paul indicates just the opposite. When he writes to this church in Thessalonica, he recalls how he converted them to faith in Christ and speaks of how they ‘turned to God from idols’ (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Only pagans worshiped idols. Paul’s converts in both Thessalonica and Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:2) were former pagans. That is why he calls himself the ‘apostle to the gentiles.’ There were other missionaries, in particular Peter, who were in charge of taking the message to the Jews (Galatians 2:8). The Thessalonian and Corinthian churches were made up of gentiles (Paul), not Jews and gentiles (Acts).” (italics in the original)

**A-9:** Both Jews and Gentiles were in the church. Ehrman apparently has a problem with any Jews being in the same church as ex-pagans, since Paul said they turned from pagan (i.e. non-Jewish) idols. But Acts 17:4 says at Thessalonica there were “some of the Jews” and “a large number of God-fearing Greeks”. 1 Corinthians 12:2 says, “You know that when you were pagans”. The majority formerly was pagan, but 1 Corinthians 12:2 does not mean 100% were not Jewish. Likewise 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says that they turned to God from idols because that is what the majority (not 100%) did.

Ehrman’s use of Galatians 2:8 is rather interesting. At the risk of overkill, let me quote it in full: “For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.” Paul certainly was an apostle to the Gentiles, but Ehrman somehow thinks this proves that Jews couldn’t or didn’t join any churches where Paul set foot either. This is all the more remarkable because it is generally agreed that Galatians was a book primarily written to counter legalistic Judaizers.

Rather than Paul in 1 Corinthians implying that the Corinthian church was only built of gentiles, Ehrman has apparently completely forgotten what Paul said about the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 1:12 that some Corinthians said they followed Paul; others said they followed Apollos, others said they followed Cephas (the non-Greek name of Peter). In 1 Corinthians 4:6; 16:12 Paul speaks approving of a Jewish evangelist who was prominent among the Corinthians: Apollos.

**Q-10:** Ehrman says that some critics have doubted that Paul came from Tarsus (Acts 21:39), studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), he was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:27). A tent-maker (Acts 18:3) first tried to convert Jews (Acts 14:1), arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21-18), appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11) *Jesus, Interrupted* p.58

**A-10:** Some skeptics have doubted everything. No evidence is offered to contradict any of these statements by Luke in Acts. One could spend all day addressing “doubts” when no evidence is given for the doubts.

**Q-11:** Ehrman claims that Paul (Rom 3:10; Gal 2:15-16) and Matthew’s (Mt 5:17-20; 19:17) views on the law were incompatible in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.89 and p.239; *Lost Christianities* p.98-99

Ehrman makes the unsupported claim that “If Matthew, who wrote some twenty-five or thirty years after Paul, every read any of Paul’s letters, he certainly did not find them inspiring, let alone inspired.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.89 “Paul thought that followers of Jesus who tried to keep the law were in danger of losing their salvation. Matthew thought that followers of Jesus who did not keep the law, and do so even better than the most religious Jews, would never attain salvation. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.90

“A similar view seems to be preserved in the Gospel of Matthew. To be sure, this Gospel expresses the belief that the death and resurrection of Jesus are key to salvation, as the Ebionites themselves insisted. But it also indicates that Jesus taught his follower that they needed to keep the law if they wanted to enter the kingdom of heaven. In fact, they had to keep it even better than the leaders of the Jew themselves (Matthew 5:17-20). Jesus in this Gospel is portrayed as a teacher of the law who conveys its true meaning to his followers. He never urges them to break any of the laws. He urges them to follow him by observing the law.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.238.

**A-11:** Matthew his Gospel of Jesus Christ did not write about Paul because his topic was Jesus Christ. One could also make an equally ineffective argument about Luke in his gospel not knowing anything about Paul either, - but only if we did not know anything about the book of Acts.

Ehrman missed the whole point of Matthew 5-8, but the disciples got it. Jesus said in Matthew 5:20, “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus was not saying his disciples should do more legalistic traditions than the Pharisees, as Matthew 15:10 proves. Rather, in Matthew 9:12-13 Jesus says, “…It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” When people are confronted with the requirements of getting to heaven, without needing God’s mercy, their response is like the disciples in Matthew 19:25 “When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, ‘Who then can be saved?” Jesus answered them in Matthew 19:26 “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

**Q-12:** Ehrman asks if God overlooked idolators in Acts 17:22-31, or did He condemn idolatry in Romans 1:18-32. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.96 (See Romans 4:15 and 5:12)

**A-12:** Idolatry was always wrong, but as Acts 17:30 says, In the past God overlooked some ignorance, but no longer for those who had the opportunity to hear Paul. Rather than trying to use Romans to say God did not overlook sin in ignorance, Romans 4:15 says, because the law brings. And where there is no law there is no transgression.” Romans 5:13 says, “for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.”

**Q-13:** Paul taught that people had died with Christ but Paul allegedly taught they were not yet raised with him yet (Romans 6:5; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15). But they are already raised with Christ in Colossians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:5-6. *Jesus, Interrupted* p.127-129

**A-13:** Positionally we are already raised to life through Christ in our spirit, and our bodies will be physically raised with Christ in the future. It is not good that Ehrman picks and chooses certain scriptures, but does not bring up verses that show both aspects and go against his argument.

**Romans 6:11** says, “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

**Romans 8:10** shows both aspects clearly: “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is (present tense) alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will (future tense) also give life to your mortal bodies through this Spirit, who lives in you.” (NIV)

Likewise Colossians 3:1-4 also shows both aspects. “Since, then, you have been raised (present perfect tense) with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the fight hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now (present tense) hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear (future tense) with him in glory.” (NIV)

Romans 6:5; 8, and 1 Corinthians do not deny that we are already raised with Christ in our spirit and positionally. Rather they affirm that it is not merely spiritual resurrection, but future physical raising too. Likewise Colossians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:5-6 do not deny a future physical resurrection; rather they affirm that it is not merely a future event, put present life in the spirit too.

**Q-14:** Bart Ehrman asks if Christians were supposed to obey governing [Roman] authorities in Romans 13:1-2,4, or will the Roman authorities be wicked and evil in Revelation 17:18 (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.97-98)

**A-14:** I asked my 14-year old daughter this, and she could see the answer clearly: both are true. Paul lived under one of the most despicably evil Roman emperors of all time: Nero. Paul would know in his own time how wicked the Roman Emperor could be; he would not have to wait until Revelation was written (almost 50 years after his martyrdom) to know that governing authorities could be very evil. Yet, Paul still taught us to obey the governing authorities. Early Christians did obey the governing authorities, except when their commands went against the higher commands of God.

**Q-15:** Ehrman writes, “For Paul, faith meant having a trusting acceptance of Christ’s death in order to be put into a right standing with God. It is a relational term, meaning something like ‘trust.’ In the Pastoral Epistles the word means something else; the set of beliefs and ideas that make up the Christian religion (Titus 1:13). It is not a relational term but a term that specifies a set of Christian teachings, the content of what has to be believed – which is how the term comes to the used in later Christian contexts. Thus, this is an example of how the Pastoral Epistles appear to stem from a later, non-Pauline setting.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.130)

**A-15:** Galatians 1:23; Ephesians 4:13 and other verses prove that Ehrman does not know what he is talking about in one way, and 1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Timothy 3:15, and Titus 3:15 prove that Ehrman is wrong in a second way. Paul shows both aspects of faith in both his earlier letters (epistles) and his later, pastoral letters.

**A. Faith meaning doctrinal beliefs:**

**A1. Paul’s earlier epistles (contrary to Ehrman)**

**Gal 1:23** “They only heard the report: ‘The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.’”

**Eph 4:1** “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”

(Ehrman agrees that books below teach faith is a set of doctrinal beliefs)

**Eph 4:13** “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature,”

**A2. Paul’s pastoral epistles (Ehrman would agree)**

**1 Tim 4:6** “…truths of the faith”

**Tt 1:13** “Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.”

**Tt 2:2** “sound in faith”

**Conclusion:** There are verses where faith means truth or doctrine in both Paul’s early letters and the pastoral epistles.

**B. Faith meaning trusting in general**

**B1. Paul’s earlier epistles (Ehrman would agree)**

**Rom 1:17** “will live by faith”

**Rom 3:25** “faith in his [Jesus’] blood”

**Rom 4** Abraham being justified by faith

**Gal 2:16** “justified by faith in Christ”

**Gal 3:2b** “hearing of faith”

**Gal 3:8** “justify the nations by faith”

**Gal 3:9** “those of faith”

**Gal 3:12** “just shall live by faith”

**Gal 3:22** “promise by faith of Jesus Christ”

**Gal 3:24** “justified by faith”

**Gal 3:25** “but faith coming”

**Gal 3:26** “through faith in Christ Jesus”

**Gal 5:5** “hope of righteousness out of faith”

**Eph 1:1** “faithful in Christ Jesus”

**Eph 1:15** “your faith in the Lord Jesus”

**Eph 3:17** “through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts”

**B2. Paul’s pastoral epistles (contrary to Ehrman)**

**1 Tim 1:5** “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

**2 Tim 3:15** “which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

**Tt 3:15** “Greet those who love us in the faith.”

**C. Faith can be taken either or both ways**

**C1. Paul’s earlier epistles**

**1 Cor 15:1-2,14,17** “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (14) And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.” … (17) “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...” (NIV) (This emphasizes the doctrines of Christ’s resurrection as well as Christ’s death.)

**Gal 3:7** “those of faith”

**Gal 3:13** “the law is not of faith”

**Gal 3:23** “before the coming of faith”

**Eph 1:15** “hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus”

**Eph 2:8** “by grace you have been saved, through faith”

**C2. Paul’s pastoral epistles (these can be taken either way)**

**2 Tim 2:18** “wandered away from the truth. … they destroy the faith of some”

**Tt 1:4** “son in our common faith”

**Q-16:** Ehrman sees inconsistencies with a view of the afterlife (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.261). “This view of the eternal and bodiless existence of the soul is not found in the earliest Christian writings, but only in writings that appeared later (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.266).

**A-16:** Actually Ehrman is mistaken: we don’t believe in an eternal and bodiless existence of the soul forever. We believe in a bodiless existence of the soul, for a while, until Jesus returns and then an eternal existence with a new, glorified body after that. Regardless, both Christians and Bible critics believe the earliest Christian writings were letters of Paul.

Here are verses Ehrman agrees are by Paul that show an existence of the soul after death apart from the body.

**2 Cor 5:8** “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

**Php 1:23b-24** “I desire to depart [die] and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

**Rom 8:38-39** “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Q-17:** “In short, with the passing of time, the apocalyptic notion of the resurrection of the body becomes transformed into the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. What emerges is the belief in heaven and hell, a belief not found in the teachings of Jesus or Paul, but one invented in later times by Christians who realized that the kingdom of God never would come to this earth. This belief became a standard Christian teaching, world without end.” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.266

**A-17:** I reread the parts around this quote to make sure I understood correctly, that Ehrman believes early Christians did not believe in heaven or hell. It is somewhat unclear whether or not Ehrman is also says that later Christians invented immortality of the soul too, but regardless, he is saying they were unknown to Jesus, Paul, or presumably the first Christians.

Maybe I should not have been, but I was shocked at what I understand to be the seeming ignorance of this alleged expert on the New Testament. Let’s talk about immortality of the soul first. Way back before Moses, time, Egyptians embalmed their corpses as mummies, because they believed in the immortality of the soul. Ancient Sumerians, in their myth of Inanna and Dumuzi, showed an accepted belief in immortality of the soul. Also the Sumerian Dilmun poem, dated from 2400 B.C., mentions a place where the gods were, called Dilmum, where gods and Ziusdra, a human who had attained immortality lived. The Dilmun poem dates from around 2400 B.C. Many Jewish writings prior to Jesus, including 2 Maccabees 12:44 and 1 Enoch speak of dead being conscious. In the Old Testament, Isaiah 53:8-9 the suffering servant was cut off from the living and “assigned a grave with the wicked”, yet in 53:10 “he will see his offspring and prolong his days”. Even 1 Corinthians, a book Ehrman accepts is written by Paul, has an entire chapter on the resurrection of the dead (chapter 15). He also discusses our immortality in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8. Even Gnostics Ehrman brings up elsewhere believed in a transcendent, non-material, afterlife for the spiritual people.

As for heaven and hell, the Greeks and Romans had Elysian fields for the blessed, and Tartarus for the cursed. Jewish writings prior to Christ, such as 1 Enoch, tells of two compartments of Sheol (the grave): prison for the wicked, and paradise for the righteous. Jesus in the gospels actually talked about Hell more than Heaven. It is interesting that Jesus uses the known term “paradise” in talking with the thief on the cross. 1 Peter 3:19 mentions the spirits in prison.

In summary, many pagans believed in immortality of the soul and a form of Heaven and Hell. Jews prior to Christ believe in a prison and paradise. Paul’s early letters taught immortality, heaven and hell. Even the Gnostics believed in a non-material afterlife for themselves. Yet incredibly, Ehrman claims immortality of the soul and a bodiless heaven and hell are “later inventions” of Christians.

**Q-18:** In Rev 1:7 and Acts 1:11 was Jesus coming back in the clouds show they thought there was a cosmic “up”? (Bart Ehrman in *Jesus, Interrupted* p.280-281)

**A-18:** I am surprised at Ehrman’s absolute skepticism here. If a space shuttle orbited the earth, and on a cloudy day it went through the clouds to land, I would say it came back down through the clouds. And I don’t have to believe in a cosmic “up” to say that.

**Q-19: No homosexuality?** Bart Ehrman writes, “In thinking about which parts of the Bible have something to say in the modern context, it is important to recall the historical view that the biblical authors were all living in a different world from ours and reflected the assumptions and beliefs of people in their world. Their world, to pick a particularly cogent example, had no concept of what we think of as homosexuality. To put it differently, homosexuality didn’t exist in that world. Why? Not because men didn’t have sex with men (they did) or women with women (they did), but because there was no sense of sexual orientation in that world, or any world, until the notion of sexual orientation developed among Western thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.280)

Ehrman uses the two preceding examples to generalize. “So, too, with all the Bible’s teachings – about women, about same-sex relations, about extra-marital sex, about capital punishment, about war, about wealth, about slavery, about disease, about … well, about everything.” (*Jesus, Interrupted* p.281)

**A-19:** Wow! Apparently Ehrman has not read the Old Testament in a very long time, especially Leviticus 21:22,29. Surely he does not think Leviticus 21 was “developed among Western thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”!

What pagan Greeks and Jews did many centuries later did not affect the concept of same-sex relationships being evil for a Jewish person (such as Saul of Tarsus or even Jesus), reading the Old Testament. By the way, long before western nineteenth century thinkers existed, at least eleven early Christian writers wrote specifically against homosexuality prior to 325 A.D. You can see these at [www.BibleQuery.org/History/ChurchHistory/WhatEarlyChristiansTaught.htm](http://www.BibleQuery.org/History/ChurchHistory/WhatEarlyChristiansTaught.htm). Ehrman is simply amazing.

**Q-20:** Ehrman writes, “It is hard to believe that these two letters [James and Jude] could have been written by two lower-class Aramaic-speaking peasants from Galilee (whose more famous brother [Jesus] is not known to have been able to write, let alone compose a complicated treatise in Greek).” *Jesus, Interrupted* p.134-135

**A-20:** As mentioned before, Ehrman says this because he does not believe the people of Galilee would speak Greek. This is despite having Greek on their coins and being surrounded on three sides by Greek-speaking regions. Also mentioned before is that he tries to use statistics of the Roman Empire in general and apply them to Jews living in Palestine.

**Q-21:** Ehrman mentions that one commentator points out, In Jude 4-10, how could people who were licentious, indulging in unnatural lust, corrupting the flesh, carousing together, and following ungodly passion catch a congregation unawares? (*Lost Christianities* p.198)

**A-21:** People can do things in secret. Jude does not say they did any of these things during the worship gatherings. Rather, they did those things unknown to people in the congregation, or they may even have told a few others in the congregation to leave them astray, and yet they were still tolerated.

**Conclusion:** Ehrman brought up many standard alleged contradictions. But all of his contradictions can be answered.

(Unless otherwise noted, Bible verses are from the NIV)

Bible textual variants are discussed at [www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponsetoEhrman1\_TextualVariants.html](http://www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponsetoEhrman1_TextualVariants.html).

The canon of the Bible is discussed at [www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponsetoEhrman4\_Canon.html](http://www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponsetoEhrman4_Canon.html).

The video series another speaker called the Making of the Messiah is discussed at [www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponseToTheMakingOfTheMessiah.html](http://www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponseToTheMakingOfTheMessiah.html).

For a bibliography see [www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponseToEhrman\_ListOfReferences.html](http://www.BibleQuery.org/OtherBeliefs/Skeptics/ResponseToEhrman_ListOfReferences.html)

by Steven M. Morrison, PhD.