

Tunnel Vision by Hendrik Joubert

A panel of theologians were discussing the apparent contradiction between details in Luke's **(27:39-43)** account of the crucifixion, and that of Matthew **(27:44)** and Mark **(15:32b)**. Matthew and Mark say that both robbers insulted the Lord, while Luke says that only one did. One of the men on the panel objected to the solution of elapsed time – Matthew and Mark describe the initial situation, while Luke points out that one changed his attitude. The objector chose to “admit,” as he was “afraid” we all will have to, that Luke added the details himself merely because he wanted to emphasize repentance. That Luke talks more about repentance than the others seems true, but to make him lie – even if one considers this a white one – to illustrate repentance is simply foolish. It is a demonstration of the fact that few honestly believe the Bible to be inspired of God.

The number of apparent contradictions in the Bible depends on the person one speaks to. Often the perception of a contradiction is the result of a lack of information, or prejudice. Any time one judges a matter before you had the opportunity to consider all the information, you pre-judge. However, we use the term prejudice when people willfully – for reasons of their own – choose to ignore information. Those who desire to please God cannot have this attitude; they should consider all the Lord has revealed before reaching a conclusion on any matter.

The idea of man deciding on what belongs in the Bible is a concept which is difficult to handle. On the one hand it is true that books cannot be added indiscriminately, but it would seem that some realize that God has the final say in the matter. It is interesting to notice the arguments and efforts of theologians to determine what belongs in the Bible. The influence of doctrinal prejudice becomes obvious when you consider Luther's discomfort with the book of James, while others believe that Ephesians says too much about the church. When all is said and done the same books appear in each Bible, the only difference is the order of importance they place because of their doctrinal preferences.

Contradictions arise when you form an opinion before considering every verse on a given subject, and you then find a passage which does not agree with your conclusion. It is here where the concept “interpretation” becomes quite handy. The passage which disagrees with your conclusion is subjected to interpretation so that it will harmonize with your conclusion.

The significance of the opening statement in the Lord's “sermon on the mount” becomes clear when one considers the state of the religious world today. It takes humility to discard all opinions and conclusions to allow God to tell us what it is He wants. It takes humility to come to a proper realization of the seriousness of

sin – to reduce one to mourning. Only then will you meekly approach the throne of God, truly hungering and thirsting after His righteousness. Then will one understand true mercy. We will do things from a pure heart with pure motives, only to please God. We will truly understand what it means to be at enmity with God, and we will work diligently at making peace between God and our neighbor. We will not be discouraged by any form of persecution. We will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

A person in this frame of mind will not be presumptuous. When the Bible proves us wrong, we will not find ways to make it go away. We will not have the confidence to start our own doctrines or denominations and lead others away from God's word. We will not develop tunnel vision as we try to serve two masters.