Gospel Contradictions & Scripture Citations

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More than 130 passages in the four Gospels are widely flagged as contradicting another Gospel, misquoting or misattributing the Hebrew Bible, or being genuinely unclear. This list collects the ones most discussed by scholars and critics; it is broad but no list can be truly exhaustive, since what counts as a contradiction depends partly on how much harmonizing one allows.

Each entry gives the references and the tension in one line. Ways believers and scholars explain these are summarized in the final section. Verse numbers follow standard English Bibles.

Old Testament citations

The hardest cases are wrong attributions and claims that something "is written" with no matching text; context shifts depend more on one's view of how prophecy works.

Wrong source or person named

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 1:2–3	Mark opens by introducing John the Baptist with a prophecy.	"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face… The voice of one crying in the wilderness…" (earliest manuscripts: "in Isaiah the prophet")	The first line is Malachi 3:1 blended with Exodus 23:20; only the second is Isaiah 40:3. Later scribes changed "Isaiah" to "the prophets."
Matthew 27:9–10	The priests use Judas's returned silver to buy the potter's field.	"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver…"	The 30 pieces cast to the potter come from Zechariah 11:12–13. Jeremiah has a potter (ch. 18) and a field purchase (ch. 32), but no silver.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 2:26	Jesus defends his disciples picking grain on the Sabbath by citing David.	"He went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread"	1 Samuel 21:1 says David came "to Ahimelech the priest." Abiathar was his son (1 Samuel 22:20). Matthew and Luke drop the name.
Matthew 23:35	Jesus blames the Pharisees for all the prophets' blood.	"unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar"	The man killed in the temple court was "Zechariah the son of Jehoiada" (2 Chronicles 24:20–21). Son of Berechiah is the later prophet (Zechariah 1:1), whose death isn't recorded.
Matthew 13:35	Explaining why Jesus taught in parables.	"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables"	The quote is Psalm 78:2, a psalm of Asaph retelling Israel's history. Some early manuscripts read "Isaiah the prophet."
John 15:25	Jesus says the world hates him without reason.	"that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause"	The words come from Psalm 35:19 or 69:4, David's laments, not the Torah.

"It is written," but no clear source

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 2:23	Joseph settles the family in Nazareth after returning from Egypt.	"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene"	No such verse exists, and Nazareth never appears in the Old Testament. Proposed links (*netzer*, "branch," Isaiah 11:1; a Nazirite, Judges 13:5) don't match.
John 7:38	Jesus speaks at the Feast of Tabernacles.	"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."	No verse says this. The nearest (Ezekiel 47:1, Zechariah 14:8) describe water from the temple or Jerusalem, not a believer.
Luke 24:46	The risen Jesus explains the scriptures to his disciples.	"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day"	No verse predicts a Messiah rising on the third day. Hosea 6:2 ("in the third day he will raise us up") is plural and about Israel.
Matthew 5:43	Sermon on the Mount.	"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."	The first half is Leviticus 19:18. "Hate thine enemy" is in no Torah text.
Mark 10:19	A rich man asks how to inherit eternal life.	"Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother."	"Defraud not" is not one of the Ten Commandments. Matthew and Luke leave it out.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 9:12–13	Coming down from the transfiguration, the disciples ask about Elijah.	"it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things… they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him"	No text says the Son of Man must suffer, or that the returning Elijah would be mistreated. Malachi 4:5–6 has Elijah restoring families.

Context shifted

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 1:23 / Isaiah 7:14	Isaiah 7: King Ahaz is threatened by Syria and Israel (about 735 BC); Isaiah gives him a sign.	Isaiah: "the *almah* [young woman] shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew: "a virgin shall be with child."	The sign was for Ahaz: before the child knows good from evil, the two kings' lands will be deserted (7:16). "Virgin" comes from the Greek translation.
Matthew 2:15 / Hosea 11:1	Hosea recalls the Exodus to rebuke Israel's idolatry.	"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."	Hosea describes the nation's past; the next verse says "they sacrificed unto Baalim." It is not a prediction.
Matthew 2:17–18 / Jeremiah 31:15	Exiles are led through Ramah toward Babylon; the chapter promises their return.	"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children"	Rachel's children are the exiled tribes, and verses 16–17 say they will come back. Ramah is north of Jerusalem; Bethlehem is south.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 2:6 / Micah 5:2	Micah: a ruler from Bethlehem will defend Israel against Assyria (5:5–6).	Micah: "though thou be little among the thousands of Judah." Matthew: "art not the least among the princes of Juda."	Matthew reverses "little" to "not the least," and Micah's ruler is a military deliverer from Assyria.
Matthew 8:17 / Isaiah 53:4	Isaiah's servant suffers on behalf of others.	"Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."	Matthew applies it to Jesus healing crowds, not to suffering for them.
Mark 12:35–37 / Psalm 110:1	A royal psalm about the king's victory.	"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand"	The Hebrew is YHWH speaking to *adoni*, "my lord," a normal title for a human king. Jesus's argument requires David to be speaking of someone greater.
John 10:34 / Psalm 82:6	God judges corrupt rulers or members of the divine council.	"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High."	The next verse reads "But ye shall die like men." Jesus uses it to defend calling himself the Son of God.
John 19:36	Soldiers don't break Jesus's legs.	"A bone of him shall not be broken."	The source is the Passover lamb rule (Exodus 12:46) or Psalm 34:20 about the righteous in general, neither a prediction.
John 19:37 / Zechariah 12:10	Jerusalem mourns as God pours out a spirit of grace on it.	Zechariah: "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." John: "They shall look on him whom they pierced."	The Hebrew has God speaking ("me"); John changes it to "him."

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
John 19:24 / Psalm 22:18	A sufferer's lament that ends in praise.	"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."	A lament read as prediction. John splits the parallel lines into two separate acts.
Matthew 12:40	The Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign.	"as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"	Friday afternoon to Sunday dawn is about 36 hours and two nights. Jonah's story is not a prophecy.

Wording that depends on the Greek or is misread

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 21:2–7 / Zechariah 9:9	Zechariah's humble king, described in Hebrew poetic parallelism.	Zechariah: "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Matthew: "brought the ass, and the colt… and they set him thereon."	The Hebrew repeats one animal twice; Matthew has two, with Jesus sitting on "them." Mark, Luke and John have one.
Matthew 15:8–9 / Isaiah 29:13	Isaiah rebukes Judah's insincere worship.	Matthew: "in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Isaiah: "their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men."	"In vain they worship me" comes from the Septuagint. Jesus's argument against the Pharisees depends on the Greek wording.
Matthew 12:21 / Isaiah 42:4	Isaiah's servant brings justice to the earth.	Matthew: "in his name shall the Gentiles trust." Isaiah: "the isles shall wait for his law."	Matthew follows the Greek; the Hebrew is about distant lands awaiting his teaching.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Luke 4:18–19	Jesus reads from the Isaiah scroll in the Nazareth synagogue.	"recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised"	Hebrew Isaiah 61:1 has "opening of the prison." "Sight to the blind" is from the Septuagint, and the next line comes from Isaiah 58:6.
Matthew 27:34	Wine is offered to Jesus at the crucifixion.	Matthew: "vinegar to drink mingled with gall." Mark 15:23: "wine mingled with myrrh."	Matthew changes Mark's myrrh to gall, echoing Psalm 69:21 ("They gave me also gall").

Birth and genealogy

Only Matthew and Luke tell the birth story, and the two accounts share very few details beyond Bethlehem, Mary, Joseph and the virgin birth.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 1:16 vs Luke 3:23	Both trace Jesus's ancestry through Joseph.	Matthew: "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary." Luke: "Joseph, which was the son of Heli."	Joseph has two different fathers.
Matthew 1:6 vs Luke 3:31	The line from King David down to Joseph.	Matthew: "David the king begat Solomon." Luke: "Nathan, which was the son of David."	Different sons of David, and almost no shared names between David and Joseph.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 1:8, 11 vs 1 Chronicles 3:11–16	Matthew lists the kings of Judah.	"Joram begat Ozias… Josias begat Jechonias"	Chronicles places Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah between Joram and Uzziah, and Jehoiakim before Jeconiah. Matthew drops them to get 14 generations.
Matthew 1:17	Matthew summarizes his genealogy.	"from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations"	Counting Jechonias to Jesus gives only 13 names.
Luke 3:36	Luke's line back to Adam.	"Sala, which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad"	Hebrew Genesis 11:12 has Arphaxad as Salah's father; Cainan appears only in the Septuagint.
Matthew 2:1 vs Luke 2:1–2	Dating the birth.	Matthew: "born in Bethlehem… in the days of Herod the king." Luke: "this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria."	Herod died about 4 BC; Quirinius's census was AD 6, roughly ten years apart.
Matthew 2:11 vs Luke 2:4–7	Where the family lived.	Matthew: the wise men "come into the house." Luke: Joseph went "out of the city of Nazareth… unto… Bethlehem."	Matthew implies a Bethlehem home; Luke has them travel from Nazareth and lay the baby in a manger.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 2:13–23 vs Luke 2:39	After the birth.	Matthew: "flee into Egypt." Luke: "when they had performed all things… they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."	Matthew has years in Egypt, then a move to Nazareth out of fear; Luke has a return to Nazareth after about 40 days.
Matthew 1:20 vs Luke 1:26–28	The birth announcement.	Matthew: "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream." Luke: "the angel Gabriel was sent… to a virgin."	The announcement goes to Joseph in a dream, or to Mary in person.
Luke 1:32–35 vs Mark 3:21	What Jesus's family knew.	Luke: "shall be called the Son of God." Mark: "his friends… went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself."	Mary was told who he was, yet his family later thinks he's out of his mind (Mark 3:31 places his mother there).
Luke 1:36 vs John 1:31–33	Relationship of Jesus and John the Baptist.	Luke: "thy cousin Elisabeth" is pregnant with John. John: "I knew him not."	They are relatives in Luke; John says he did not know Jesus until the Spirit descended.

Ministry

The largest structural difference is between John and the other three: John's ministry spans about three years and centers on Jerusalem, while Mark, Matthew and Luke describe roughly one year mostly in Galilee.

Order and timeline

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
John 2:13, 6:4, 11:55 vs the Synoptics	Length of Jesus's ministry.	John: "the Jews' passover was at hand" three separate times. Mark, Matthew, Luke: one Passover, at the end.	About three years in John versus about one year in the others.
John 2:13–16 vs Mark 11:15–17	Jesus drives the traders from the temple.	John: right after the Cana wedding. Mark: after the entry into Jerusalem in the final week.	Placed at the very start of the ministry in John, at the end in the others.
Mark 1:12–13 vs John 1:29–2:1	After Jesus's baptism.	Mark: "immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness… forty days." John: "the next day… the next day… the third day there was a marriage in Cana."	Forty days of temptation versus calling disciples and attending a wedding within days.
Matthew 4:5–8 vs Luke 4:5–9	Satan's three temptations.	Matthew: pinnacle of the temple, then the high mountain. Luke: the kingdoms of the world, then Jerusalem's temple.	The second and third temptations are in reverse order.
Mark 1:16–20 vs John 1:35–42	Calling Peter and Andrew.	Mark: "as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew… casting a net." John: Andrew, a disciple of John the Baptist, follows Jesus in Judea and brings Simon.	Different place, situation and way of meeting.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Luke 5:1–11 vs Mark 1:16–20	The same call of the fishermen.	Luke: a miraculous catch "their net brake" before they follow. Mark: they simply leave their nets.	Luke adds a miracle the others place elsewhere (compare John 21:6, after the resurrection).
John 1:42 vs Matthew 16:17–18	Simon's new name.	John: at first meeting, "thou shalt be called Cephas." Matthew: at Caesarea Philippi, "thou art Peter."	Named at the beginning versus well into the ministry.
Luke 4:16–30 vs Mark 6:1–6	Rejection at Nazareth.	Luke: the opening scene of the ministry. Mark: after many miracles, in chapter 6.	Same event placed at very different points. Luke 4:23 even refers to miracles at Capernaum that haven't happened yet.
Mark 6:45, 53	Disciples cross the lake by boat.	"go to the other side before unto Bethsaida… came into the land of Gennesaret"	They set out for one town and arrive at another, unexplained.
Mark 7:31	Jesus returns from the region of Tyre.	"departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis"	The Greek says through Sidon, which is north of Tyre, away from Galilee, and Decapolis lies southeast. A puzzling route.

Miracles

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 5:1–2 vs Matthew 8:28	Jesus casts demons into pigs.	Mark: "the country of the Gadarenes [earliest manuscripts: Gerasenes]… a man with an unclean spirit." Matthew: "there met him two possessed with devils."	One man versus two. Gerasa is about 30 miles from the lake, yet the pigs run straight into it.
Mark 10:46 vs Matthew 20:29–30 vs Luke 18:35	Healing blindness at Jericho.	Mark: "as he went out of Jericho… blind Bartimaeus." Matthew: "as they departed from Jericho… two blind men." Luke: "as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man."	One or two men, and leaving or approaching the town.
Matthew 8:5–8 vs Luke 7:3–6	The centurion's sick servant.	Matthew: "there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him." Luke: "he sent unto him the elders of the Jews… the centurion sent friends."	The centurion speaks to Jesus himself, or only through messengers.
Matthew 9:18 vs Mark 5:23, 35	Jairus asks Jesus to heal his daughter.	Matthew: "My daughter is even now dead." Mark: "My little daughter lieth at the point of death"; news of her death comes later.	Already dead versus dying.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 11:12–21 vs Matthew 21:12–20	Jesus curses a fig tree.	Mark: cursed, then the temple cleansing, and "in the morning… the fig tree dried up." Matthew: temple first, then "presently the fig tree withered away."	Different order, and overnight versus instantly.
Mark 6:35–44 and 8:1–4	Two miraculous feedings.	After feeding 5,000, the disciples ask, "From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"	They act as if the first miracle never happened, which suggests one event told twice.
Mark 8:12 vs Matthew 12:39	Pharisees demand a sign.	Mark: "There shall no sign be given unto this generation." Matthew: "there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."	No sign at all versus one exception.
John 2:11, 4:54 vs John 2:23	John numbers Jesus's signs.	"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana… This is again the second miracle" (4:54). But 2:23: "many believed… when they saw the miracles which he did."	Signs in Jerusalem come between the "first" and "second."

Teachings and instructions

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 6:8–9 vs Matthew 10:10, Luke 9:3	Instructions for sending out the Twelve.	Mark: "take nothing… save a staff only… be shod with sandals." Matthew: "neither shoes, nor yet staves." Luke: "neither staves."	Take a staff and sandals, or not.
Matthew 5:1 vs Luke 6:17, 20	Jesus's major sermon.	Matthew: "he went up into a mountain." Luke: "he came down… and stood in the plain."	Different setting, and Luke's Beatitudes include woes and different blessings ("Blessed be ye poor" versus "poor in spirit").
Matthew 6:9–13 vs Luke 11:1–4	The Lord's Prayer.	Matthew: taught unprompted in the sermon. Luke: taught when a disciple asks, in a shorter form.	Two different versions in two different settings.
Matthew 19:9 vs Mark 10:11	Teaching on divorce.	Matthew: "except it be for fornication." Mark: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery."	Matthew has an exception; Mark and Luke 16:18 have none.
Mark 9:40 vs Matthew 12:30	Who counts as an ally.	Mark: "he that is not against us is on our part." Matthew: "He that is not with me is against me."	Opposite principles.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 10:5–6 vs Matthew 28:19	Who the mission is for.	"Go not into the way of the Gentiles… go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Later: "teach all nations."	Israel only, then all nations.
Matthew 20:20–21 vs Mark 10:35–37	Request for places of honor.	Matthew: "came to him the mother of Zebedee's children… desiring." Mark: "James and John… come unto him, saying, Master, we would…"	The mother asks, or the brothers ask.
Matthew 11:14 vs John 1:21	Is John the Baptist Elijah?	Jesus: "this is Elias, which was for to come." John, asked "Art thou Elias?": "I am not."	Jesus says he is; John says he isn't.
Matthew 3:14 vs Matthew 11:2–3	John's recognition of Jesus.	At the baptism: "I have need to be baptized of thee." Later from prison: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"	John recognizes Jesus, then later is unsure.
John 3:22 vs John 4:1–2	Did Jesus baptize?	"there he tarried with them, and baptized." Then: "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples."	The same Gospel says yes, then no.
Mark 4:31	Parable of the mustard seed.	"which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth"	The mustard seed is not the smallest seed (orchid seeds, for example, are smaller).
Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18 vs Luke 6:16	Lists of the Twelve.	Matthew and Mark: "Thaddaeus." Luke: "Judas the brother [or son] of James."	A different name in the list.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 2:14 vs Matthew 9:9	The tax collector Jesus calls.	Mark: "Levi the son of Alphaeus." Matthew: "a man, named Matthew."	Different names for the same story.
Mark 6:3 vs Matthew 13:55	Hometown people question Jesus.	Mark: "Is not this the carpenter?" Matthew: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"	Matthew seems to soften Mark's wording.

Passion week

The most discussed conflict here is the date: in Mark, Matthew and Luke the Last Supper is the Passover meal, while in John Jesus dies the afternoon before Passover, as the lambs are slaughtered.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 14:12 vs John 18:28, 19:14	The day of the Last Supper and crucifixion.	Mark: "the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover" the disciples prepare the meal. John: the priests avoid defilement "that they might eat the passover"; the trial is on "the preparation of the passover."	In the Synoptics the Last Supper is the Passover meal; in John, Jesus dies before Passover begins, as the lambs are slaughtered.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 14:1–3 vs John 12:1–3	A woman anoints Jesus at Bethany.	Mark: "after two days was the feast… in the house of Simon the leper… poured it on his head." John: "six days before the passover… Mary… anointed the feet of Jesus."	Different day, house, woman and part of the body.
Luke 7:36–38	A similar anointing.	In Galilee at a Pharisee's house (named Simon, 7:40), "a woman in the city, which was a sinner" anoints his feet.	A third version of the scene, much earlier and in a different place.
Mark 14:22–24 vs John 13:2–5	What happened at the Last Supper.	Mark: "Take, eat: this is my body." John: Jesus "began to wash the disciples' feet," with no bread and cup.	John omits the institution of the Lord's Supper entirely.
Luke 22:17–20	Luke's version of the supper.	A cup, then bread, then "Likewise also the cup after supper."	Two cups in a different order; the second cup and "this do in remembrance of me" are missing from some early manuscripts.
Mark 14:44–45 vs John 18:4–5	Jesus's arrest.	Mark: Judas "kissed him." John: Jesus "went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?… I am he."	Judas identifies Jesus with a kiss, or Jesus identifies himself.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 14:53–64 vs Luke 22:66 vs John 18:13–24	Jesus's Jewish trial.	Mark: at night before "all the chief priests and the elders." Luke: "as soon as it was day." John: questioned by Annas, then sent to Caiaphas, no council trial.	Night, morning, or no formal trial.
Mark 14:62 vs Matthew 26:64 vs Luke 22:67–68	Asked if he is the Christ.	Mark: "I am." Matthew: "Thou hast said." Luke: "If I tell you, ye will not believe."	A direct yes, an indirect answer, or a refusal.
Luke 23:7–11	Pilate sends Jesus to Herod Antipas.	"he sent him to Herod… Herod with his men of war set him at nought."	Only Luke includes this scene.
Mark 14:30 vs Matthew 26:34	Jesus predicts Peter's denial.	Mark: "before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Matthew: "before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."	Twice versus once.
Mark 14:66–70 vs John 18:17–25	Who challenges Peter.	Mark: the same maid twice, then bystanders. John: the doorkeeper girl, then a group at the fire, then a relative of Malchus.	The questioners and places differ.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 27:5–7 vs Acts 1:18	Judas's death.	Matthew: "he… went and hanged himself," and the priests "bought with them the potter's field." Acts: "this man purchased a field… and falling headlong, he burst asunder."	Who bought the field and how Judas died differ.
Mark 14:64 vs Luke 23:50–51	The council's verdict.	Mark: "they all condemned him." Luke: Joseph of Arimathea, "a counsellor… had not consented."	All condemned him, but one member didn't.

Crucifixion

Each Gospel gives Jesus different final words, and Mark and John disagree on the hour.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 15:25 vs John 19:14	The hour of the crucifixion.	Mark: "it was the third hour, and they crucified him." John: "about the sixth hour" Pilate is still presenting Jesus.	Crucified at 9 a.m. versus still on trial at noon.
Mark 15:21 vs John 19:17	Carrying the cross.	Mark: "they compel one Simon a Cyrenian… to bear his cross." John: "he bearing his cross went forth."	Simon carries it, or Jesus does.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 15:23 vs Matthew 27:34	Drink before crucifixion.	Mark: "wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." Matthew: "vinegar… mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."	Myrrh or gall, refused or tasted.
Mark 15:26, Matthew 27:37, Luke 23:38, John 19:19	The sign on the cross.	"THE KING OF THE JEWS" / "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" / "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS" / "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS"	Four different wordings of the same written sign.
Mark 15:32 vs Luke 23:39–43	The two crucified criminals.	Mark: "they that were crucified with him reviled him." Luke: one rails, "But the other answering rebuked him… To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."	Both mock, or one repents.
Mark 15:40 vs John 19:25–26	Where the women stood.	Mark: "women looking on afar off." John: "there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother…" with the beloved disciple.	Far off versus close enough to speak. John alone puts Jesus's mother there.
Mark 15:34 vs Luke 23:46 vs John 19:30	Jesus's last words.	Mark: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Luke: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." John: "It is finished."	Three different final sayings.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Luke 23:45–46 vs Mark 15:37–38	The temple curtain tears.	Luke: "the veil of the temple was rent" before Jesus cries out and dies. Mark: Jesus "gave up the ghost. And the veil… was rent."	Before his death or after.
Mark 15:39 vs Luke 23:47	The centurion's words.	Mark: "Truly this man was the Son of God." Luke: "Certainly this was a righteous man."	Different statements.
Matthew 27:51–53	Events at Jesus's death.	"the earth did quake… many bodies of the saints which slept arose… and appeared unto many."	A mass resurrection in Jerusalem appears in no other Gospel or ancient source.
John 19:39–40 vs Mark 16:1	Preparing the body.	John: Nicodemus brings "about an hundred pound weight" of myrrh and aloes and they wrap the body. Mark: on Sunday the women "bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him."	The body was already anointed lavishly, yet the women come to anoint it.
Matthew 27:62–66	Securing the tomb.	"Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can."	Only Matthew mentions guards.

Resurrection and appearances

The four accounts agree the tomb was found empty on Sunday by women including Mary Magdalene, but differ on almost every other detail, including where Jesus first appeared.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 16:1, Matthew 28:1, Luke 24:10, John 20:1	Who went to the tomb.	Mark: "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome." Matthew: "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Luke: those two, "Joanna… and other women." John: "Mary Magdalene" alone.	One to five or more women.
Mark 16:2 vs John 20:1	Time of arrival.	Mark: "at the rising of the sun." John: "when it was yet dark."	After sunrise or still dark.
Mark 16:4 vs Matthew 28:2	The stone.	Mark: "they saw that the stone was rolled away." Matthew: "there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended… and rolled back the stone."	Already moved, or moved in front of them.
Mark 16:5, Matthew 28:2, Luke 24:4, John 20:12	Who they met.	"a young man… sitting on the right side" / "the angel… sat upon" the stone / "two men stood by them" / "two angels in white sitting."	One or two, men or angels, inside or outside, sitting or standing.
Mark 16:8 vs Luke 24:9	What the women did.	Mark: "neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." Luke: they "told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest."	Told no one, or told everyone.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 28:9 vs John 20:17	Touching the risen Jesus.	Matthew: they "held him by the feet." John, to Mary Magdalene: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended."	Held versus forbidden to touch.
Matthew 28:10, 16 vs Luke 24:49	Where the disciples should go.	Matthew: "go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Luke: "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem."	Galilee versus staying in Jerusalem. All of Luke's appearances are near Jerusalem.
Luke 24:33–36 vs John 20:19, 24	The evening appearance.	Luke: "found the eleven gathered together… Jesus himself stood in the midst." John: "Thomas, one of the twelve… was not with them."	Eleven present versus ten.
Luke 24:50–51 vs Acts 1:3, 9–12	The ascension.	Luke: on Easter night, near Bethany, "he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Acts: "seen of them forty days," then taken up from Olivet.	Same day versus 40 days later (same author).
John 20:22 vs Luke 24:49	Receiving the Holy Spirit.	John: "he breathed on them, and saith… Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Luke: wait "until ye be endued with power from on high" (fulfilled at Pentecost, Acts 2).	On Easter evening or 50 days later.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 28:16–17	The final meeting in Galilee.	"when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted."	Doubt even after seeing him, unexplained.
1 Corinthians 15:5–7 vs the Gospels	Paul's list of appearances (about AD 55).	"he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that… of above five hundred brethren at once… After that… of James."	No women, Peter first, and appearances to 500 and to James that no Gospel describes.

Sayings in tension and timing predictions

The predictions that the end would come within the disciples' lifetime are among the most debated passages in the Gospels.

Predictions about timing

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 9:1, Matthew 16:28	Jesus speaks to the disciples and the crowd.	"There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."	They all died without seeing it, unless it refers to the transfiguration or something else.
Mark 13:30, Matthew 24:34	After describing the end times and his return.	"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."	That generation passed without his return.
Matthew 10:23	Sending out the Twelve.	"Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."	Predicts his coming before their mission ends.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 14:62	Jesus answers the high priest.	"ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."	The high priest and council did not see this.
Mark 13:32 vs John 16:30	What Jesus knows.	Mark: "of that day and that hour knoweth no man… neither the Son." John: "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things."	Limited knowledge versus knowing everything.

Sayings that pull against each other

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
John 5:31 vs John 8:14	Jesus defends his authority to opponents.	"If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." Then: "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true."	Opposite claims in the same Gospel.
John 5:22 vs John 8:15	Jesus's role as judge.	"the Father… hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Then: "I judge no man."	All judgment versus none. (John 12:47 repeats "I judge him not.")
Matthew 10:34 vs John 14:27	Jesus on peace.	"I came not to send peace, but a sword." Versus: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."	Opposite statements about his purpose.
John 10:30 vs John 14:28	Jesus and the Father.	"I and my Father are one." Versus: "my Father is greater than I."	Equal versus subordinate.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
Matthew 5:18 vs Mark 7:19	The Law of Moses.	"one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Versus Mark: "purging all meats" (modern translations: "Thus he declared all foods clean").	The Law stays entirely, yet its food rules are set aside.
Matthew 23:2–3 vs Matthew 16:12	The Pharisees' authority.	"All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." Versus: "beware… of the doctrine of the Pharisees."	Obey their teaching, and beware of it.
Mark 4:11–12 vs Mark 4:33	Why Jesus used parables.	"unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive." Versus: "spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it."	To hide meaning, or to make it understandable.
John 3:13 vs 2 Kings 2:11	Jesus to Nicodemus.	"no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven."	Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (and Enoch was taken, Genesis 5:24).
John 7:8–10	Jesus's brothers urge him to go to the feast.	"I go not up yet unto this feast… then went he also up… as it were in secret."	Many early manuscripts read "I go not up," without "yet," making it a statement he then reverses.

Passages	Context	Actual text	The problem
John 18:20 vs Mark 4:34	Jesus describes his teaching.	"in secret have I said nothing." Versus: "when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."	Nothing in secret versus private explanations.
Mark 8:29–30 vs John 10:24–25	Revealing that he is the Messiah.	Mark: "he charged them that they should tell no man of him." John: "I told you, and ye believed not."	Kept secret in Mark; openly claimed in John.
John 1:18 vs Genesis 32:30, Exodus 33:11	Seeing God.	"No man hath seen God at any time."	Jacob: "I have seen God face to face." Moses spoke with God "face to face."

Passages missing from the earliest manuscripts

Two well-known passages, Mark's long ending and the woman caught in adultery, are absent from the oldest complete Greek manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, 4th century), and most modern Bibles mark them.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Mark 16:9–20	The end of Mark's Gospel.	"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." (16:18)	The oldest manuscripts end at 16:8 with the women afraid. The longer ending is a later addition.
John 7:53–8:11	A woman caught in adultery.	"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."	Absent from the earliest manuscripts; later ones place it in different spots, including after Luke 21:38.

Passage	Context	Actual text	The problem
Luke 22:43–44	Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives.	"there appeared an angel… his sweat was as it were great drops of blood."	Missing from several early manuscripts.
Luke 23:34	On the cross.	"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."	Missing from some early manuscripts.
John 5:3–4	The pool of Bethesda.	"an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water."	Absent from the earliest manuscripts; added to explain the scene.
Matthew 6:13	End of the Lord's Prayer.	"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."	A later liturgical addition, not in the earliest manuscripts.
Mark 1:1	Mark's opening line.	"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"	"The Son of God" is missing from some early manuscripts.
Matthew 17:21, 18:11; Mark 9:44, 46; others	Various.	Example, Matthew 18:11: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."	In the King James Version but dropped in modern translations, since they were copied in later from other Gospels.

How these are explained

There are four broad approaches, and which one a reader finds convincing tends to decide whether these count as contradictions at all.

- **Harmonization (traditional, especially evangelical):** Accounts are complementary, not conflicting. Mentioning one blind man doesn't deny a second; Luke's genealogy may be Mary's line; Jesus may have cleansed the temple twice; John may follow a different Passover calendar.

- **Ancient writing conventions:** Ancient biographers paraphrased speeches, rearranged events by theme, and simplified. Jewish interpreters (as in the Dead Sea Scrolls) routinely reapplied and blended texts and cited the best-known prophet. By that standard, many items here were normal practice.
- **Typology and fuller meaning:** Christians read texts like Hosea 11:1 or Isaiah 7:14 as patterns that point beyond their first context, so "fulfilled" means completed, not predicted.
- **Historical-critical scholarship:** The Gospels were written about 40 to 70 years after Jesus by authors with different theological aims, using sources (Mark, plus shared material in Matthew and Luke). Differences reflect those aims and real errors, and scripture was sometimes searched after the fact to support beliefs.

Factual slips like wrong names and missing quotations are the hardest to explain under any approach. Differences in detail between eyewitness-style accounts are often seen as normal by historians, since independent accounts rarely match exactly.