

I have now had a week to reflect on my debate with Matthew Firth about whether there are contradictions in the Bible. Now I'd like to give my personal reactions. I don't mean for this to be a continuation of the debate per se — I won't be adducing more evidence or counter-evidence. But I thought it might be helpful to put some thoughts on paper (well, on screen) about what a debate like this can show or at least did show, in my opinion. Matthew is on the blog and he's perfectly welcome to comment on these posts or even to respond with one or more posts of his own, giving his own second-level reflections.

So here are mine. Since I'd like to flesh these out at some length (since they might be helpful for others thinking generally about their view of the Bible and what constitutes a contradiction), this will take several posts.

I begin with the question of whether either of us have a particular agenda/bias that more or less require us to see things the way we do.

I will refer to Matthew here as Rev. Firth here because if I call him Matthew it will be confusing when I'm talking about Matthew's understanding of Matthew (the Gospel).

Stakes in the Matter

In a debate like this on a heated religious topic, both sides are often convinced that the other person has a deep agenda intimately related to, but not identical with, the issue being debated. They have a bias that forces them to see things the way they do.

My view was (and still is) that for personal religious reasons ...

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