



March 26, 2023

“Harmony, Anointing, & Forgiving”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

Wednesday Evening Classes 6:30-8:00 † Resurrection Sunday Brunch in Two Weeks

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A harmony of the Anointing of Jesus at dinner?

- 1) Each author shared historically accurate incidents from Jesus’ earthly life in order to present a theological, Christological, Gospel.
- 2) “Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her” (Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9).

LUKE 7:36–50 ~

The time and place of the event? Luke is in perfect chronological order, right? (Luke 1:3).

The “in an orderly sequence,” phrase is the single Greek word, καθεξής (kăth-ěx-ās). Literally, it means “according to the following,” and carries the idea of orderly and in this context, it means in logical order, not chronological order.

The Bible is God’s self-revelation and as such it is a theology book written to make and exhort theological points accurately, in an orderly, understandable, sequence.

Luke placed the event in a section of his Gospel where it was appropriate for the theological content he related.

LUKE 10:38–42 ~

Did Luke use that same evening to make an entirely different theological point in chapter 10?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Mark 14:3–10 & Matthew 26:6–15 are nearly identical and John 12:1–8, is quite similar. In Luke, it is Simon the Pharisee, in Matthew and Mark, it is Simon the Leper, and in John it is an unnamed host with Jesus and Lazarus as guests. In all cases, Martha is in charge and Mary is anointing Jesus.

The teaching that captivated Doctor Luke... It is forgiveness. Jesus taught us how to pray in Matthew 6:12, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Debts and debtors is ὀφείλημα (ō-phā-lā-mä), meaning that which one owes as an obligation.

We are daily asking the Father to forgive us for failing to be exactly like Jesus.

The second part – the qualification part – is that we would forgive others for failing to be exactly like Jesus as well. Jesus then elaborated on this single issue in Matthew 6:14&15. “Unforgiving people are unforgiven people.”

Example: A person betrays a close friend, let’s say it is their own spouse to whom they have pledged fidelity to in the sight of Almighty God (Hebrews 13:4, Hebrews 10:31). Personally, I agree with Dante Alighieri that it is a “compound fraud.” A fraud which goes against the bonds of love, blood, and honor, and that such a person is the epitome of a two-faced hypocrite.

If Jesus is “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), what then completes that transaction and makes the universally available gift of Salvation effective for a particular person?

The Good News can only be properly appreciated by a person fully grasping the bad news. Because of human pride you and I refuse to believe the Truth that we are every bit as deserving of eternal torment as anyone else.

- 1) Forgiving someone in no way minimizes their crime.
- 2) Forgiveness always comes in layers.
- 3) To Forgive, but not forget, is not to forgive at all.
- 4) Forgiving does not mean that there are no consequences and boundary adjustments.
- 5) Forgiveness really is the Agapê of God in actual practice.
- 6) Our forgiving of others is a reflection of how much forgiveness we feel that we have received.
- 7) In order for forgiveness to have its intended effect it must be accepted by the one forgiven.

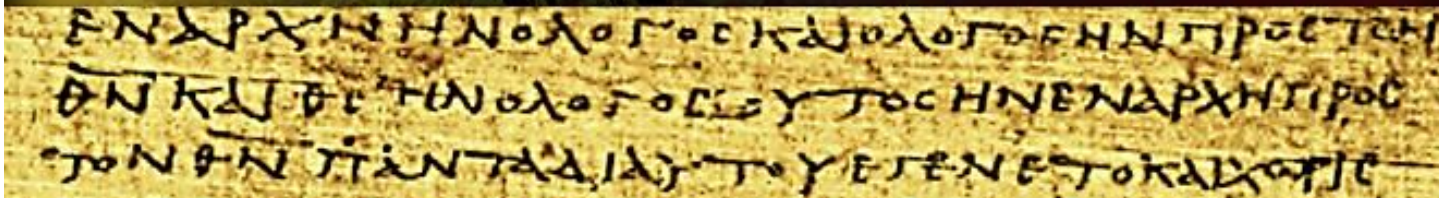
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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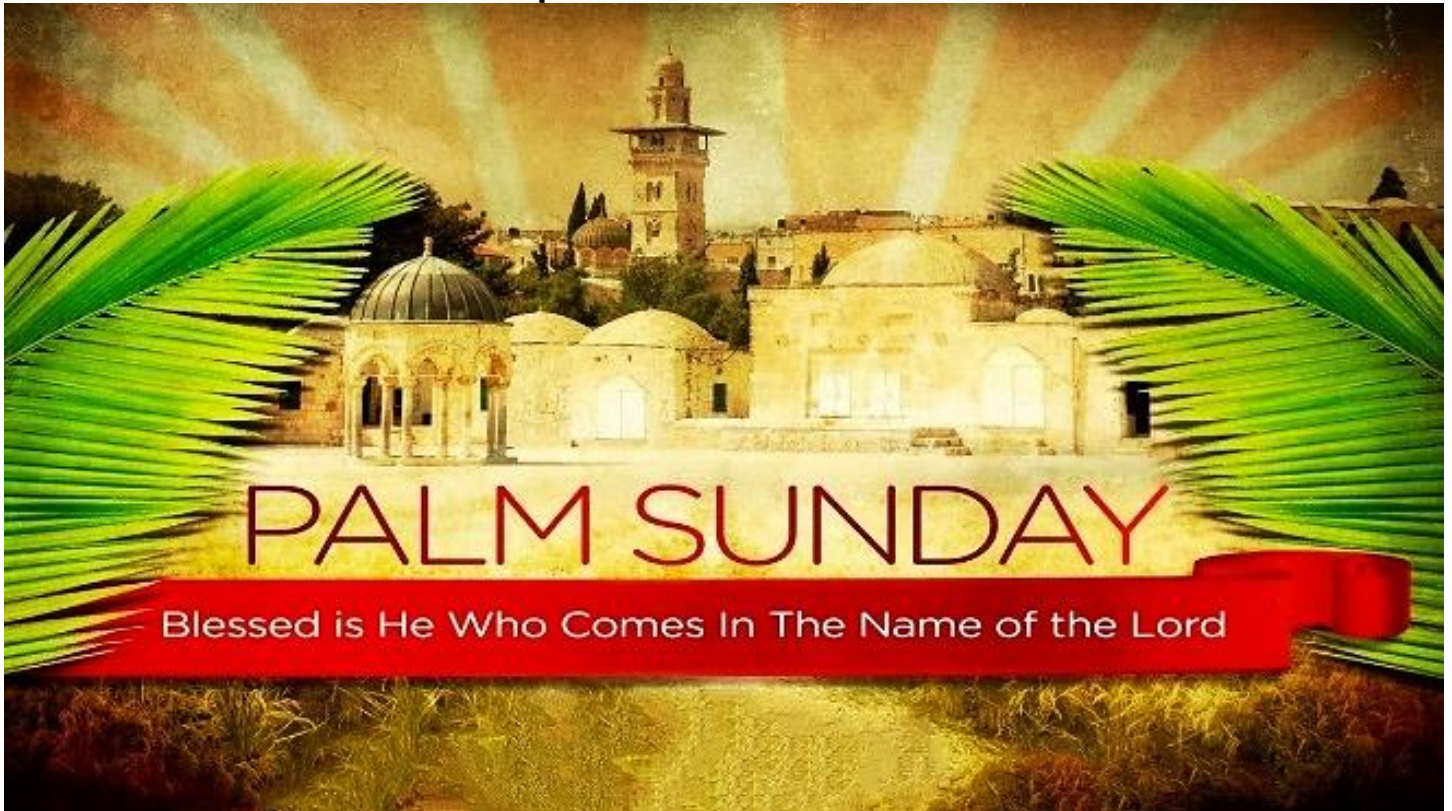
Lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Last week we talked about the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany as recorded in John's Gospel. I

promised that we'd take a closer look at the siblings Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, along with the anointing of Jesus in all four Gospels.



Next week is Palm Sunday and the plan then is to harmonize the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' Triumphal Entry. Since we're talking about plans...



The following Sunday, April 9th, is Resurrection Sunday where we will skip Sunday school to allow people to bring in and prepare food. The main service at 10:30 is a sunrise service, because the sun will be rising somewhere. It should be exciting. That will be followed by Sunday Brunch in the new building.



THE GOSPEL PERSPECTIVE

Last week I mentioned that many people, looking at the various accounts of Jesus being anointed by a woman at a dinner see two, or even three, distinct, separate, events. I doubt that very much for a lot of reasons, some which will become clear today and two of which I alluded to last week.

1) First, each author shared historically accurate incidents from Jesus' earthly life in order to present a theological, Christological, Gospel. The purpose of which is to give people enough information and exhortation to accept Christ as the only Lord and Savior and thereby be eternally Saved. That's the singular goal, not information for information's sake,

not history, not science, not entertainment... Salvation of souls.

When I am trying to do the same in a sermon, I may share several past events and I will put them in the order that they contribute to the flow of my message, without regard to the actual chronological sequence in which they occurred. In addition, I'll tell only the parts of the story that help me make my point.

As an example, if I were to use five past incidents in a single sermon, I would do so not to give insight into me, or my past, or to give a history lesson, or to inform you about what happened on five particular days in the past... In such a case, I would have no interest whatsoever in giving you the actual knowledge of the events that I'd share – I'd merely be using them to help make the sermon relatable to you – to enhance your understanding of the theological, Christological, point I'd be making. It isn't that I would falsify or mislead, it's just that I would edit my material to fit my purpose and as I said last week, not only would I leave out the parts that are not relevant, I would especially leave out the parts that would actually distract from my purpose.

2) The second thing I mentioned last week is Jesus' own words recorded in both Matthew and Mark where He said, "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her" (Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9).

If Luke's account of a woman anointing Jesus with perfume at a dinner is an entirely different event, in a different province, involving a different dinner, a different host, and a different woman, then he, the author who tells us specifically that he "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" in order to write a comprehensive account, left out of his account, the very incident that Jesus said must accompany the Gospel. The same would apply to those who see John's account as a third separate event.

It makes sense to me that all four authors would tell the story that Jesus declared would accompany the Gospel. That they would all tell of the woman anointing Jesus to honor her memory just as He predicted. We'll proceed with a harmonization of the four but let me also say that some of what I'm going to say is conjecture. As such, I'll carefully distinguish what is true and what is opinion and I will remind you that

anytime that we are dealing with uncertainties, we cannot be dogmatic. It's okay to disagree and allow others their opinions on such matters.

Don't take offense where none is intended. Never fall in love with your plans, or your opinions. With that, here we go...



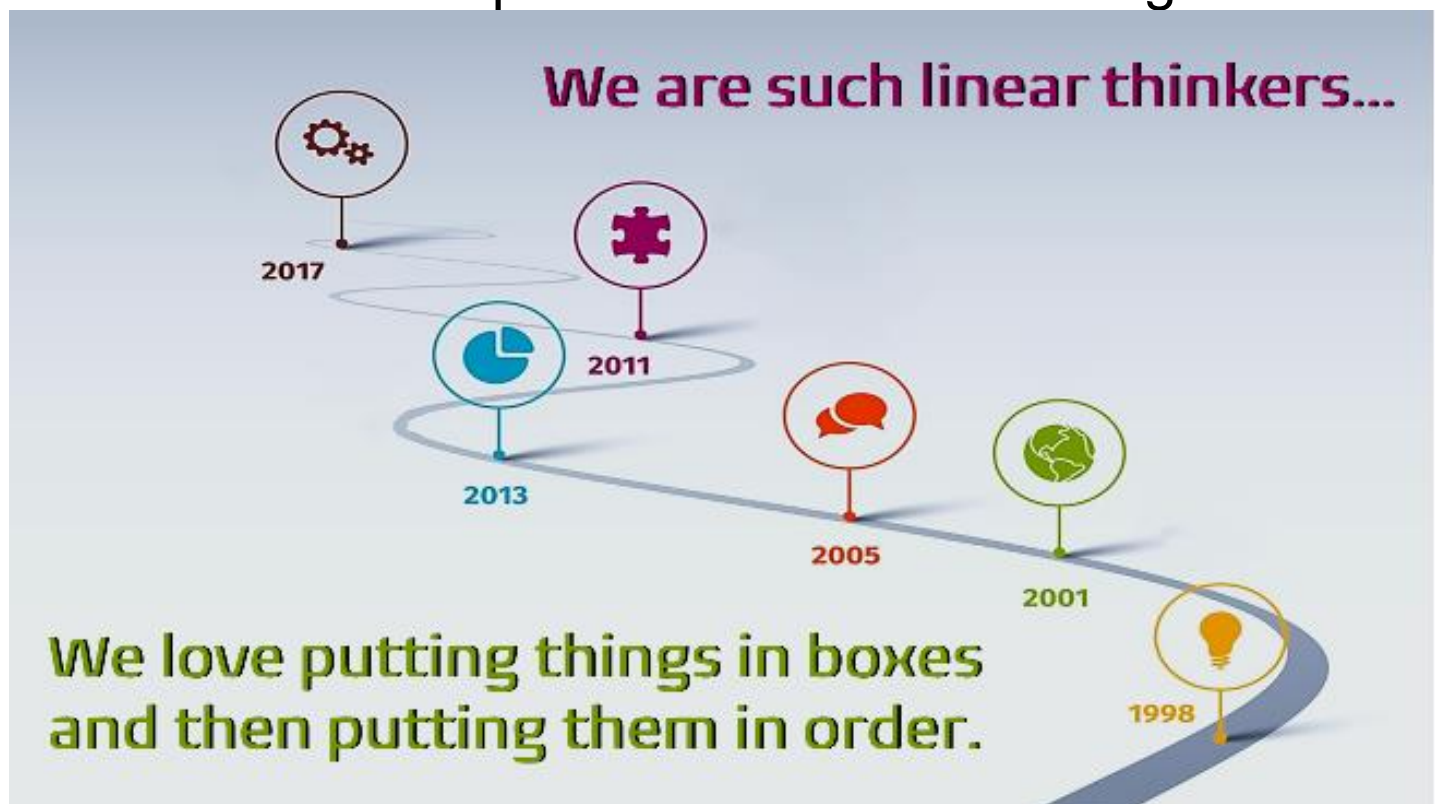
Luke 7:36–50, 36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to eat with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, 38 and standing behind Him at His feet,

weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and she wiped them with the hair of her head, and began kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. 39Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner!" 40And Jesus responded and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." 41"A moneylender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred denarii, and the other, fifty. 42When they were unable to repay, he canceled the debts of both. So which of them will love him more?" 43Simon answered and said, "I assume the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." 44And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45You gave Me no kiss; but she has not stopped kissing My feet since the time I came in. 46You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. 47For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little, loves little." 48And He said to her, "Your sins have been

forgiven.” 49And then those who were reclining at the table with Him began saying to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” 50And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

For those of you who were here last week, you’ll no doubt notice the many similarities as well as the many differences between this passage and the first bit of chapter 12 in John’s Gospel. Could this be the same incident that we saw last week?

For a lot of people, especially modern western people, the answer is a resounding no! For them it’s impossible because of the sequence and of the lesson gleaned.



The sequence... In Luke this takes place very early in Jesus' ministry and He seems to be in the northern province of Galilee, perhaps in the town of Nain, which is a long way from Bethany in the province of Judea. Beyond that, they point out that Luke alone of the Gospel writers specifically states that he crafted a chronologically accurate Gospel – there's no way this could be that same incident!

Well, if we examine it carefully, we find that Luke never said where or when the incident took place. He set it within surrounding material that does indicate both time and place, but nothing in this pericope itself requires that it fits either temporally or spatially within the surrounding material. It stands on its own.

Then there's the belief that Luke put everything in perfect chronological order. I already alluded to the verse, Luke 1:3, "it seemed fitting to me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in an orderly sequence, most excellent Theophilus." The "in an orderly sequence," phrase is the single Greek word, καθεξῆς (kath-ěx-ās). Literally, it means "according to the following," and carries the idea of orderly, or yes, sequentially. Sequentially for Luke, in this context, means in logical

order, not chronological order. What Luke was stating at the outset of his Gospel was that since he wasn't an eyewitness, he had thoroughly investigated everything carefully prepared his material and that he was now setting it down in a comprehensive way that would make sense to his audience.

We know without a shadow of a doubt that the sequence of events in Luke are not strictly chronological. So, he either made mistakes, or he never intended everything to flow chronologically, but instead to flow in a logical and rational way that would be coherent.

It's only when a person applies their own cultural-religious views to the English translation that they jump to such erroneous conclusions. The Bible in English is excellent but reading it that way you do need to be aware that it is a translation and sometimes things are lost in translation. More importantly, you need to be cautious about assuming that your mindset was their mindset, that your customs were their customs and that your experiences were their experiences.

Here's what's interesting... When we know that, and proceed accordingly by checking our assumptions, we

see that, far more often than not, the English translations actually confirm the underlying nuance. Just as here, the English translations never say that Luke was going to tell a chronologically precise history... The NASB says that Luke was going “to write it out for you in an orderly sequence.” The ESV has “to write an orderly account for you.” The NLT has “to write an accurate account.” Nearly every other English translation has something like an “orderly report,” an “orderly sequence,” or an “orderly account.” None of them say that the account will be strictly chronological.

Please remember that while the Bible is historically accurate, it was never intended to be a history book. While it contains elements of a biography, it is not a biography, and while it is scientifically accurate, it is not a science book. The Bible is God’s self-revelation and as such is a theology book written to drive the theological points as an accurate account, in an orderly sequence to make those points.

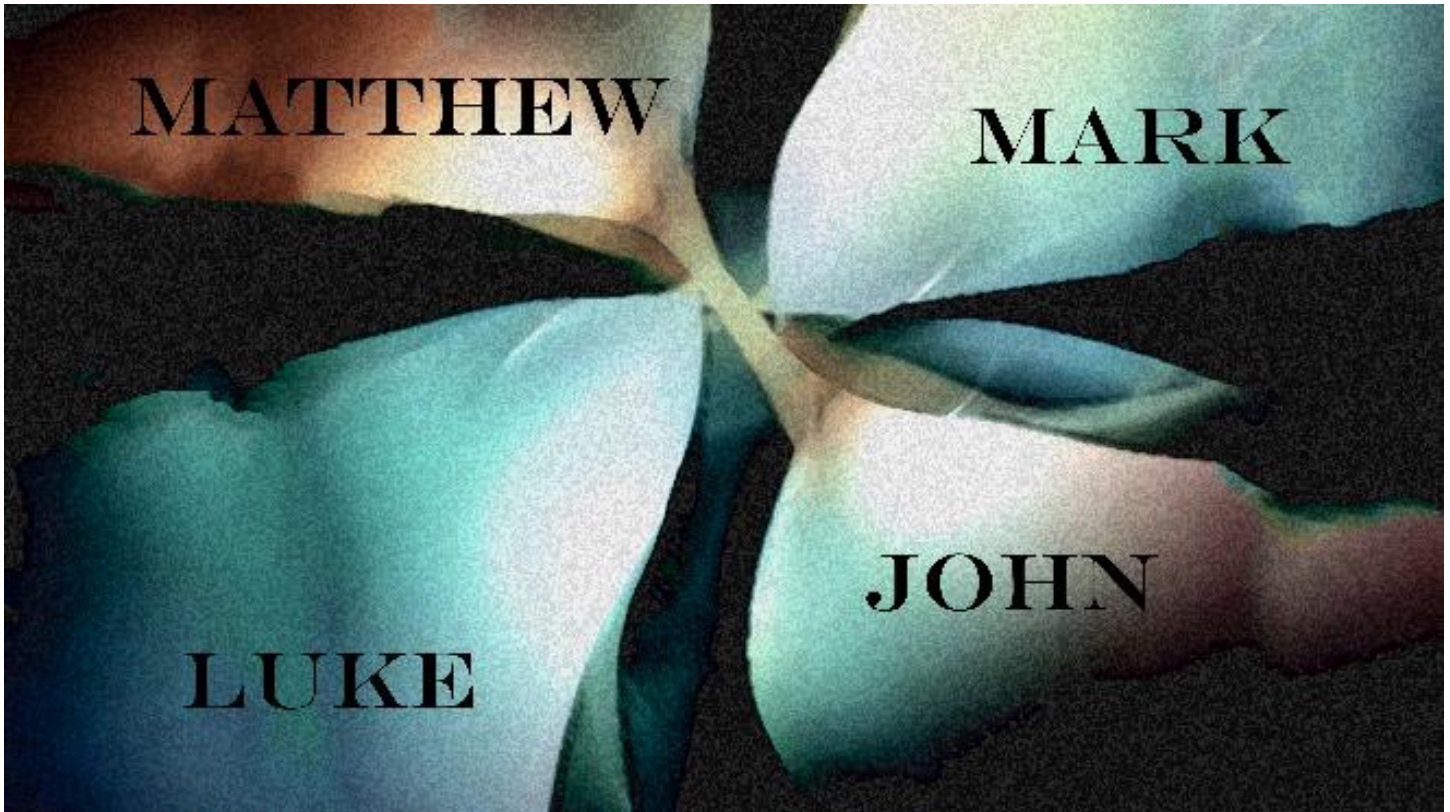
<h3>THE 5-PARAGRAPH ESSAY</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. INTRODUCE your topic, and the central idea of your message. There must be some of reader you'll believe in relation to your message. 2. EXPLAIN the evidence your first one of evidence and address how it relates to your central message. 3. EXPLAIN the evidence your second one of evidence and address how it relates to your central message. 4. EXPLAIN the evidence your third one of evidence and address how it relates to your central message. 5. CONCLUDE by summarizing your central message and your main points about that message. <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For simple, argumentative essays that require little depth. For short opinion pieces, like an editor column. When you have little time to develop a message, but need to make an impression or position paper. 	<h3>THE Toulmin Method</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>Establish a well thought-out claim (argument) by providing grounds, backing, and warrants by addressing objections with alternative responses, and by using qualifying circumstances.</p> <p>Claim: The position that you are arguing your case for or that you are recommending.</p> <p>Grounds: Supporting evidence that gives enough to your claim.</p> <p>Warrants: The links of reasoning that connect your grounds to your claim.</p> <p>Backing: Support or justification that backs up your warrants.</p> <p>Rebuttal: Opposing responses to your claim.</p> <p>Qualifying Circumstances: Conditional phrases like "only" or "usually" that limit your claim.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When writing a descriptive essay or technical paper. When making complex arguments that require a lot of supporting evidence. When you anticipate others may not agree with your position and need their compelling support in order to be persuaded. 	<h3>THE ROGERIAN METHOD</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. STATE the problem or issue at hand. 2. EXPLAIN opposing views on your position about the issue, including supporting your own position. 3. VALIDATE the opposing view by pointing out what makes it a logical position to hold on to. 4. EXPLAIN and explain your position and how it differs from the opposing view. 5. VALIDATE your position on the issue by providing supporting evidence. 6. EXPLAIN the benefits of your position and why it has more value than the other's. <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For argumentative essays where there is a lot of opposition and you are arguing with those who have never made a request. When you are trying to establish a successful case between you and the person or group of people that oppose your request. 	<h3>THE INVERTED PYRAMID</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>The inverted pyramid structure that first happens an issue rather than waiting until the end of the document. The inverted pyramid structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The document then works backwards, putting the most important information first, followed by the least important information. The inverted pyramid structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The goal with this writing style is to make sure that your audience gets everything they need to know about the issue as soon as possible and they can do so in a hurry. They can then go back to the beginning of the document if they need more details.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For news stories, press releases, and other short pieces of writing. When you need to get your message across as quickly as possible. When you are writing a document that will be read by a large number of people. 	<h3>THE HOURGLASS</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>Similar to the inverted pyramid, the hourglass structure is used in news writing. The hourglass structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The hourglass structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The goal with this writing style is to make sure that your audience gets everything they need to know about the issue as soon as possible and they can do so in a hurry. They can then go back to the beginning of the document if they need more details.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you need to get your message across as quickly as possible. When you are writing a document that will be read by a large number of people.
<h1>HOW TO ORGANIZE A PAPER</h1> <p>TEN WAYS TO WRITE THE PERFECT DOCUMENT FOR ANY OCCASION</p>				
<h3>THE MARTINI GLASS</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>Similar to the inverted pyramid, the martini glass structure is used in news writing. The martini glass structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The martini glass structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The goal with this writing style is to make sure that your audience gets everything they need to know about the issue as soon as possible and they can do so in a hurry. They can then go back to the beginning of the document if they need more details.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you need to get your message across as quickly as possible. When you are writing a document that will be read by a large number of people. 	<h3>THE PROPOSAL</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State the issue and your proposal for solving the problem. 2. Paragraph: Describe the current state or underlying issue or problem before it can be solved. 3. Explain clearly the way your knowledge or proposal as the current proposal is "how" when writing that it is a good idea to implement. 4. Present the benefits of the proposal to your reader from a reader's perspective. Then follow with: 5. Present the disadvantages of the proposal to your reader from a reader's perspective. 6. Present the benefits of the proposal to your reader from a reader's perspective. 7. Present the disadvantages of the proposal to your reader from a reader's perspective. <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When submitting a book, article, or other creative work to a publisher or editor. When writing a scholarly abstract for a conference or journal. When writing a proposal for a grant or other funding source. 	<h3>THE IMRaD FORMAT</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>The IMRaD format is the standard structure for writing scientific and technical papers. The IMRaD format is often used in scientific and technical writing.</p> <p>The IMRaD format is often used in scientific and technical writing.</p> <p>The goal with this writing style is to make sure that your audience gets everything they need to know about the issue as soon as possible and they can do so in a hurry. They can then go back to the beginning of the document if they need more details.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When writing a scientific or technical paper. When writing a proposal for a grant or other funding source. 	<h3>THE NARRATIVE</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>The narrative structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The narrative structure is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The goal with this writing style is to make sure that your audience gets everything they need to know about the issue as soon as possible and they can do so in a hurry. They can then go back to the beginning of the document if they need more details.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you need to get your message across as quickly as possible. When you are writing a document that will be read by a large number of people. 	<h3>THE INDIRECT METHOD</h3> <p>HOW IT WORKS</p> <p>The indirect method is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The indirect method is often used in news writing, public service announcements, and the media.</p> <p>The goal with this writing style is to make sure that your audience gets everything they need to know about the issue as soon as possible and they can do so in a hurry. They can then go back to the beginning of the document if they need more details.</p> <p>WHEN TO USE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you need to get your message across as quickly as possible. When you are writing a document that will be read by a large number of people.

My point is that just because Luke uses this incident very early in his Gospel, and the other three Gospel authors have it just days before the Crucifixion in their accounts cannot be used as evidence that they were different events.

Why though did Luke place it where he did if it actually occurred much later in Jesus' life? It has everything to do with the theological point. There are many ways to organize a book, chronologically is one way – it's a preferred way for our culture – but it rarely serves as the best way to teach abstract ideas and to convince an audience.

Luke was a mature Christian associate of the Apostle Paul and, as such, had no doubt heard about the anointing incident many times. He had personally read about it in both Matthew and Mark's Gospels, and he had heard it directly from several eyewitnesses whom he interviewed while investigating everything for his Gospel. He knew that both Matthew and Mark focused on the direct outcome of the event as the catalyst causing Judas to betray Jesus and that both of them, because of that focus had left out of their accounts the teaching Jesus gave about forgiveness. What if Luke decided, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to focus on that profound theological message and as a result, left out the details about the Passover, Bethany, and Judas?

If so, Luke would have placed the event in a section of his Gospel where it was appropriate for that content.



I want to come back to that teaching of Jesus that captivated Luke enough to emphasize it the way that he did, but for now let's continue to look at the harmonization of the Gospel accounts. Before we look at Matthew and Mark, we see that three chapters later, in Luke's Gospel, he gives us another dinner setting and in it he names the sisters Martha and Mary. Why there and not in chapter 7? Writers back then were reluctant to use names unless it was necessary and in the chapter 10 case, it was necessary for Luke's narrative to make sense.

It could be an entirely different occasion, but I'd say that it is far more likely that Luke has taken that same

evening and will now use it to make an entirely different theological point.

Mary	Martha
listened/absorbed	talked/commanded
sat down/rested	rushed around/busy
humble	indignant
focused on one thing	unfocused due to many things
free/peaceful	hindered/worried
trusting Jesus	trusting her own abilities
concerned with Godly things	concerned with worldly things
Jesus was the key to her help	thought Mary was key to her help
welcomed Jesus into her heart	welcomed Jesus into her home

Luke 10:38–42, 38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who was also seated at the Lord's feet, and was listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the serving by myself? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary; for

Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Remember, a dinner of the type being discussed would last several hours and a lot can happen in several hours. Notice that it says that Martha invited Jesus into her home. It's not Lazarus' home, nor is it Mary's home. It was Martha's home. Now, remember that in chapter 7 it was the home of a Pharisee named Simon. Imagine if Simon was Martha's husband and Mary his sister-in-law. Imagine if earlier in the evening we had the chapter 10 encounter. Imagine the uptight, legalistic, self-righteous, Pharisee, Head-of-the-house, hosting Jesus and Lazarus and being intensely annoyed at his sister-in-law. Can you imagine a family dynamic where such a brother-in-law would think to himself, “If Jesus only knew what a sinful pain in the rump Mary really is around here.”



In Matthew and Mark, we have nearly identical accounts. Here's Mark 14:3–10, 3While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper, He was reclining at the table, and a woman came with an alabaster vial of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head. 4But there were some indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? 5For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. 6But Jesus said, "Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed for Me. 7For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to

them; but you do not always have Me. 8She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. 9Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her.” 10Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them.

Like I say, Matthew 26:6–15, is essentially the same with a little less detail. Let’s quickly review John’s account, John 12:1–8, 1Therefore, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2So they made Him a dinner there, and Martha was serving; and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3Mary then took a pound of very expensive perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, the one who intended to betray Him, said, 5“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the proceeds given to poor people?” 6Now he said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he kept the money box, he used to steal from what was put into it. 7Therefore Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so

that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

In Luke, it is Simon the Pharisee, in Matthew and Mark, it is Simon the Leper, and in John it is an unnamed host with Jesus and Lazarus as guests. In all cases, Martha is in charge and Mary is anointing Jesus.

Notice that John tells us that Jesus directly chastised Judas while both Matthew and Mark tell us as a result of the evening Judas went out to make his deal with the Devil. Reading it all gives us a fuller picture. The public rebuke from Jesus at the dinner was the final straw for Judas... So, due to his wounded pride he made up his mind to wound back.

Now, back to the teaching that captivated Doctor Luke enough for him to place the incident in a different context. That particular teaching is on a subject that has vexed Christians from the beginning and may be the biggest struggle facing maturing Christians throughout time. It is, in a word, forgiveness. Oh, not our own... we think we get that, but our forgiving of others – that’s the issue, or so we assume.



Jesus taught us how to pray and the only part of that entire prayer that received further instruction from Him was the stanza, “Father forgive us our debts, just as, and in the same way, and to the same degree, that we also have already forgiven all of those who are indebted to us.”

Debts and debtors is ὀφείλημα (ō-phā-lā-mä), meaning that which one owes as an obligation. It can mean sin but it is used here to extend the idea of sin for a couple of reasons. 1) First, we Christians incur greater and greater debt to the Father every day by simply being allowed to be His. 2) Second, and more to the point here, is that we, as His children, have obligations and

we continually fail to live up to them. What we're asking is not to be Saved every day, but to be pardoned or excused for our everyday shortcomings as Christians. That then covers sins of commission as well as sins of omission. Sins that are overt and sins that are covert. Sins that are physical as well as sins that are psychological – what we do, and what we say, but also, what we think – it's both attitudes and behaviors and covers the whole gamut of our failure to be exactly like Jesus.

Think about that for a moment please. We are asking the Father to forgive us for failing to be exactly like Jesus. Failing to be conformed to our Lord even with the indwelling Holy Breath of God the very Spirit of Christ. The second part – the qualification part – is that we would forgive others for failing to be exactly like Jesus as well.

Can you forgive another human being for failing to be exactly like Jesus? That's the question. Can you love another enough to forgive in them the exact same sin that you assume God will forgive in you? As I said, Jesus then elaborated on this single issue in Matthew 6:14&15, "For if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.”

There is no ambiguity there at all. This isn't one of those things where we find a more nuanced meaning or a cultural adjustment. Jesus said what He said, and it means what it seems... “Unforgiving people are unforgiven people.”

Even more than that though, people are forgiven in the same way and to the same degree that they forgive others. The question you should be asking is how does that square with the rest of the Gospel, with Jesus' Own Words, “Anyone believing in Me will be saved;” how do we reconcile all of that?

To believe in Jesus means to fully accept Him as your one Lord and Savior. That in itself means that you accept the Father's gift of total forgiveness based upon Jesus' sacrifice. Here's an often-misunderstood bit about forgiveness... A person can only appropriate for themselves the amount of forgiveness that is commensurate with their recognition of their own failure.



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Here's what I mean, by way of an all-too-real hypothetical example... Let's say that a person betrays a close friend, let's say it is their own spouse to whom they have pledged fidelity to in the sight of Almighty God. Now, betrayal in general is a despicable crime devoid of loyalty and without honor. Betrayal of the marital covenant by defiling the marital bed is not just reprehensible, it is life threatening eternally speaking. Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers." In that same Bible Book in talking about the judgment of God it says, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Personally, I agree with Dante Alighieri that the deepest and most horrific “Ninth Circle of Hell” is reserved for such betrayers. Cheaters, traitors, backstabbers, mutineers, those who betray the trust of the person they are supposedly closest to, and their ringleader, poster boy, is none other than Judas Iscariot himself – the betrayer of Jesus.

Dante wrote that betraying, traitorous, cheaters, commit, what he called, “compound fraud.” It is fraud which goes against the bonds of love, blood, and honor, and such a person is the epitome of a two-faced hypocrite. With such a person trust is broken, relationship is a lie, and community is impossible. All is a deception and a manipulation.

Dante’s ride to the Ninth Circle of Hell is atop the monster Geryon, who is the personification of fraudulent betrayal. Geryon has the face of a kind, open, and honest man, but he has a tail that he tries to keep hidden. His tail is that of a scorpion with a massive poisonous barb. That’s how it is with those who cheat and betray.

Now, you might say, that was super aggressive and condemnatory. Yes, and it was entirely intentional. Why? This is the point that I'm trying to make. A person cannot properly appropriate forgiveness unless they comprehend the gravity of their sin. In fact, the amount of forgiveness that a person can receive is directly proportional to the degree to which they understand the significance of their crime.

In my example we can have a situation where God has completely forgiven the perpetrator. Total forgiveness is actually given, but the amount of that forgiveness that is effective is entirely dependent upon the sinner comprehending the depth and scope of their sin.

Let's take a step back to help us really get this vital concept... If Jesus is "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), then all sin from the beginning of time until the end of time has been covered by the Blood of Christ, and therefore, exactly as Jesus frequently said, Salvation is available to any and all who "call upon the name of the Lord" – any and all who "believe in Jesus."

What then completes that transaction and makes the universally available gift of Salvation actually effective

for a particular person? Well, clearly it is accepting the gift as it is offered. What is the gift, as it is offered, precisely?

The gift is the “Abundant Life,” which is eternal, intimate, vibrant, real, and right, relationship with Almighty God. It is offered as an all or nothing entire dependence upon Jesus and no one else, including yourself.

Why would anyone need such a gift or agree to such terms? The Good News can only be properly appreciated by a person fully grasping the bad news. The bad news is that Dante was right, a cheater deserves to be chained in a fiery pit, flayed alive, their heart repeatedly ripped out, being gnawed on by Satan in a torment beyond comprehension forever, without end. Even worse news is that Dante was wrong. Every sin deserves that same identical fate. There are not 9 circles of Hell – there’s just the Lake of Fire. The problem with people is we don’t accept that essential theological Truth.

Because of human pride you and I refuse to believe the Truth that we are every bit as deserving of eternal torment as Adolph Hitler. You and I reject the Biblical

fact that we deserve no better treatment than the disgraceful cheater of my example. You and I fail to appreciate the theological reality that the standard is God, not our fellow man. Now, that should never make Hitler, or the cheater, feel better about themselves, it should make the rest of us feel worse about our worthiness.

An analogy would be a society that, without indulging in cruel and unusual punishment, evenly applies the death penalty to all who murder. Person A murders their cheating spouse in a fit of rage and even though there are mitigating and extenuating circumstances the fact remains that they murdered another, and they are duly executed by the state. Person B is a serial mass murderer who wantonly brutalized, tortured, and eradicated millions of people multiple times.

Guess what their punishment is? Identical... It is identical, and person A can think that they are better than person B, but they both suffer the same fate, because they are both murderers and that's the worse news. No matter how good you are relative to other inmates, your fate is their fate and your Salvation cost Jesus exactly the same that their Salvation cost.

you truly get that then and only then can you fully embrace the forgiveness that you have been given.

On the other hand, if you do deny the Truth that you are equally as irredeemable as the worst offender, then you do not get what Jesus has done for you and to that exact degree, you have not properly appropriated the forgiveness found in Him for you. Because that is true, you are commensurately, proportionately, correspondingly, unforgiving of others.

To take it back around the other way as Jesus did, your lack of forgiveness for others stands as a perfect reflection of your own self-righteousness, which is personal human pride. An unforgiving person proves that they have not appropriated the forgiveness that the Father grants through Christ.

It is arrogant self-righteousness in the same order as that of the Pharisees that believes that I have been “forgiven little.” It’s either that I’m a basically good person and I don’t need much forgiveness, or it’s that I work hard to earn at least part of my forgiveness. Either way, I am meeting God partway and therefore I am a better person than those people who cannot meet

Him where I meet Him. That leads to greater arrogant self-righteousness.

Now, if I see others who outperform me, I feel bad about myself until I remember that I'm still better than them – they do better because they don't have it as hard as I do. More Arrogant self-righteousness with a little resentment thrown in for good measure.

Bottom line... if I feel that I have been "forgiven little" I will forgive little. Unforgiving people are unforgiven people.

We're basically out of time here, so let me just sum up by saying, how unforgiveable you believe that you are, because you understand the gravity of your sin and you understand the cost of forgiveness, and you understand how utterly undeserving you are that perfect Jesus would die in your place, is directly proportional to how humble and how grateful you are for that forgiveness that you have received.

A person who really gets that is a person who cannot help but see themselves in those who sin against them. Taken a step further, such a person cannot help but

extend the same mercy to them that they themselves have received.

- 1) Forgiving someone in no way minimizes their crime.
- 2) Forgiveness always comes in layers.
- 3) To Forgive, but not forget, is not to forgive at all.
- 4) Forgiving and forgetting does not mean that there are no consequences and boundary adjustments.
- 5) Forgiveness really is the Agapê of God in actual practice.
- 6) Our forgiving of others is always a perfect reflection of how much forgiveness we feel that we have received.
- 7) In order for forgiveness to have its intended effect it must be accepted by the one forgiven.

I'm going to close with 7 statements about forgiveness that you can cogitate on for the week.

- 1) Forgiving someone in no way minimizes their crime against you.
- 2) Forgiveness always comes in layers. You must keep forgiving a person at ever deepening levels.
- 3) To Forgive, but not forget, is not to forgive at all. Forgiving actually means forgetting. If you say that

you've forgiven an act, but keep bringing it up, you have not forgiven anything.

4) Forgiving and forgetting does not mean that there are no consequences and boundary adjustments. Forgiveness of the sinner never means condoning or tolerating their sin.

5) Forgiveness really is Agapê – the unconditional Love of God in actual practice. There is a personal cost to forgiving. It is a unilateral sacrifice based on your character in Christ. If the other person deserves to be forgiven, forgiveness is merely acknowledgement. True forgiveness occurs when the other person does not deserve it and that is expensive, extravagant, love.

6) Our forgiving of others is always a perfect reflection of how much forgiveness we feel that we have received. As Jesus said, "The one who is forgiven little, loves little."

7) In order for forgiveness to have its intended effect it must be accepted by the one forgiven. Only then is the relationship restored. Since you cannot control what others do, all you can do is forgive and let them decide how much, if any, of the forgiveness you've granted

they will accept. Right-relationship is possible from your side of the equation but requires the other person to make it effective. That's precisely how God rolls.

