

*The controversy: **Double events in the Bible***

Controversy?

Is it a controversy that several similar stories are repeated in the Bible? The question might be: are they repeated? In ancient days, unfortunately, they did not have the internet or a printing press. Stories and history were passed down by word of mouth. Now, you could say that these facts were considered watered down. Rumours and gossip generally get twisted along the way. Is that the same with ancient history?

Strangely though, there is some proof that the passing down of facts are really accurate. Why do we have at-least four renditions of a great flood in ancient Mediterranean days? How could these different cultures tell a similar tale? I suspect there was a great flood seen through different eyes. Passed down through the centuries they had a different interpretation on how it happened. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls proved that some of the writings in the Bible were deadly accurate. These people found it important to keep the story straight: controversy?

Because the stories were memorized it is important to have ways to remember something. Common themes are one way. I read a story of Polycarp. This rendition has similar elements to Jesus. What is Polycarp and what is the story of Jesus. Some say he is a type of Jesus to the people in that day. The book of Matthew portrays Jesus as a type of Moses. Are the facts skewed or is this a smart way of communicating to people in those times.

One of the most interesting doubles comes in Abraham's story. In the book of Genesis, Abraham is concerned that his beautiful wife Sara will be taken and he will be killed. That is the way things happened in ancient history. Abraham did this twice. Not only that, but, his son Isaac, did it too. Sometimes important events and people have repeated stories to make a marker. It points out to the reader that this is a special time or person in their history. We do know that

sometimes history repeats itself because people just don't learn. The habits and actions of people seem to repeat themselves through their lives. Maybe this type of thinking is just being played out in the Bible writing? What do you believe?

Maybe?

Maybe there is controversy and maybe not. Is the telling of the same story troubling? Are the facts messed up because the stories are similar but not the same? What if a story was seen by two different people? Do they write the same view? Last night a football player fumbled on the one yard line as he was entering the end zone. The Ref said it was a fumble but the replay said it was a penalty after the fact. Who is right and who was wrong? Maybe they are both right because that is the way they saw it. Some stories in the Bible are repeated for memory purposes like 40 days and the feeding five thousand. The story might be real but maybe markers to remember are used.

Abraham is an interesting story. Why tell a similar story twice? I find it interesting that within the whole life of Abraham the writer chose these stories. There are years and years between these events. Surely something else happened that was interesting. I think one of the coolest attributes of the Bible is the view. Why do Hebrew and Jewish men write stories that make them look bad? A picture of a community is to tell the good stuff more than the bad isn't it? Time and time again the Bible paints a poor picture of its leaders. Maybe the controversy is in the bad judgment of Abraham.

In ancient times women couldn't just leave a bad situation. Abraham's wife Sara was put in peril twice by her husband. Maybe the point of this double story is that leopards don't change their spots too often. Abraham is a man of struggling faith most of his life. The Bible might be pointing out that we are all like this sometimes. Even his son did the same thing years later.

Maybe the controversy is within the family lines or Hebrew heritage. There is one other story that caught my attention: the parting of the Red Sea by Moses.

I suppose it was common for people to part the water rather than float over it. God puts Moses against the sea in peril. Moses was told to raise his hands and the Lord parted the sea to rescue them. Years later Joshua was Moses successor and he too was at the edge of water. This time it was the Jordan River. God parted these waters too so the Israelites could cross. Later than this the Prophet Elijah parted the Jordan River as well to cross. Right after that his understudy Elisha parted the Jordan to return to the other side. These stories are doubled and quadrupled to point out succession and faith of a new generation. What do you believe?

Yes?

Yes there is controversy with the double stories of Jesus. Jesus is sitting on a mountain side (in John 6) with a large crowd before him. He decided to test his disciple's faith by asking them to feed the 5000 men. The cool part is that there might have been more people if you include the women and children. We know a child was there because they distributed his food. This miracle was to grow faith and show God could provide. So many people dislike this miracle because it seems impossible. That has caused quite a controversy.

In Matthew 14 we seem to have another feeding a large crowd story. This time it is within the same area called the Sea of Galilee. Is this the same story as the one in John? The Fish and loaves are the same. The stories are a little different but the results are the same. Some complain that the stories are the same but the details are different. Isn't that the different view scenario or is it a controversy? In Matthew 15 we have another feeding of 4000 with 7 loaves and a few small fish. This story takes place in Tyre which is far from the Sea of Galilee. The relating stories in Luke and Mark are also slightly different.

Why so many fish stories? Jesus says to the disciples are one point they will go from being fishermen to fishers of men. Is the point “The miracles” or is it the theme of being there for people. We tend to make controversy about the details over the message. It’s the same with another Jesus double story: Mary Magdalene. There is so much controversy here with this woman. Did she anoint Jesus head, wash his feet, and become his wife. Let’s try and unravel this controversy.

One thing to remember is that all the Gospels are looking at the same life of Jesus through different eyes. The stories are similar but hints are in different accounts. An unknown woman anointed Jesus head in Matthew 26. In Luke 7 a prostitute washed Jesus feet with her tears and covered them with perfume. In John 12 Mary Magdalene washed Jesus feet with perfume just like the prostitute above. Strangely it says in John 11 that Mary has washed Jesus feet before it happened in Chapter 12. Mary is generally seen at Jesus feet and with Perfume. So is another unnamed woman in the Gospels. What do you believe?

No?

Maybe when it comes to double’s in the Bible there is no controversy. There are even some words that are repeated. Martha was all worried about her sister and dinner. Jesus looked at her and said “Martha Martha.” It means there is emphasis. This type of word use is to make a strong point in ancient writing. Maybe the double stories are doing the same thing. It’s less about them being repeated or similar, but rather that they emphasise a point or theme.

There are other doubles in the Bible. Gen 9:25 says “Slave of Slaves.” It can mean lower than a slave. The Tent of Meetings inner chamber was called the “Holy of Holies” meaning even more holy. In 1 Samuel 3 the Lord calls to a boy named Samuel. The boy thinks it’s his master. God actually calls him 4 times. The last time God says “Samuel Samuel.” Again we have

emphasis of two words. Maybe God is getting annoyed or impatient with the boy. Maybe it's God's way of saying he is talking and not his master. Either way, two words, phrases, or stories might mean more than you think

Deuteronomy 21 has a saying of receiving a double portion. It means to doubly desire more of a good thing. It can also mean to emphasise the richness of a gift or request. Hanna received a double blessing. Elisha asked for double of the power of his master Elijah. I can imagine him saying "Ohhh I want more of what you got." The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Revelation 18 says God will pay them double back for their wicked deeds. There is a strong emphasise upon doubles to give the meaning strength.

Let's go back to Abraham. He is about to raise a knife and sacrifice his only Son because God asked him to. At that moment God calls out "Abraham Abraham." The man stops in an instant. I think he knew what a double shout meant. God used this expression to say emphatically "Ok Abraham, I now know you respect me." Maybe the four Gospels do have repeated stories. Maybe God did it this way to emphasis the work and teachings of Jesus. Maybe from time to time we need to hear things twice or more until we get it. What do you believe?