

## Bible Basics – Are there conflicting accounts?

### Overview

The answer to the question posed is both yes and no. Yes because some are different but no because they are not a conflict with moral teachings or the truth. This sounds like another conflict but let's examine how this can be.



### Different authors

In a previous article we discussed the 4 types of Old Testament authors. We have to keep in mind that the mentality of the Jew in the documentation of the Word was different from what you and I use. They never intended their writings to be history book nor a science book. They were writing about what they felt God was telling them through the prophets, what they observed in nature, and how to live.

This is particularly so in the Pentateuch which are the first 5 books of the Bible. You will find 4 separate and careful but complex sources for the Word. They are the Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomic - abbreviated as Y, E, P and D – characteristic. This is very well shown in the book of Genesis. Chapter one has an account of creation that presents man as the climax of creation and after the other creatures. Chapter two is chiefly concerned with the creation of man who is now shown as being made before the other creatures which are made for man's sake. To the Hebrew writer

there is no discontinuity here and both were considered of great importance to them.

### The Synoptic Gospels

An observant eye and ear will notice that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke have similar but not quite the same account in some of them. We call them Synoptic Gospels because they are similar but not exactly the same. Each of these Gospels were written to a different audience so the inspired author wrote what he thought was important to his audience. We do not call these differences “errors” as they still relate the same moral account.

Matthew was writing to Jews so his accounts had information they would understand. According to tradition the Gospel of Luke was written by Luke who was a constant companion of Paul. We know that he was not Jewish and was a medical doctor According to tradition Mark wrote this first Gospel using Peter as his source. Unlike Paul's letters; the Gospel of Mark does not identify its author nor his audience so he seems to write to a wider audience than either Matthew or Luke.

One of the accounts frequently pointed to as being in conflict is the genealogies for Matthew and Luke. However this can be explained using the above discussion. Matthew's account begins (forward in time) the lengthy list of names with Abraham and ends up with Joseph, the husband of Mary. He writes to the Jews and intends to connect Jesus with Abraham and that he is the promised messiah. Luke's account begins with the birth of Jesus and works backwards in time through Abraham and finally to Adam – the first man. Since Luke writes to gentile audiences that are not as familiar with Jewish history he emphasizes all of creation. There is no conflict - just different audiences for the same concept – that is Jesus is the promised messiah and son of God.