

## 181-195

181) One of the quotes of the Text that many people use sarcastically comes from Genesis 4- “Am I my brother’s keeper?” If people read the Bible they’d know that God actually gave an answer and it’s likely not the one they look for- He basically said, “You betcha!” “The blood of thy brother crieth up from the ground to me.” “I’m paying attention, Cain!”

182) Esther is a colorful story but really not one that ever should have happened. Had Mordechai (and Hadassah/Esther) gone back to Israel when the doors were opened out of Persia there would have been no one for Haman to be jealous of. What’s she doing in the harem of a pagan king? Why weren’t they back in Jerusalem rebuilding the city of God? Was Babylonian/Persian living too comfortable? Just asking. (How gracious of God to work with this mess!)

183) Piggy-backing on #182- It wasn’t just those two. Ezra 2 says that 42,360 went back home when it was allowed. Whoopee! The sad truth it doesn’t tell you is that it’s estimated that up to a million and a half chose to stay! Clear until a thousand years after Jesus the largest Jewish community in the world was still in “Babylon.” Consider that...

184) You know that all the apostles (except John) died violent deaths but did you know that the location of the deaths tells you a lot about the early church? That first generation spread far and wide from Italy to India and down to North Africa it appears! (Leaving Galilee’s nets sure opened up vistas those men never foresaw!)

185) Continuing from #184- The claimed location of the deaths of two of them also speaks of something amazing. In the disciple group you had a Roman collaborator (Matthew, the tax collector) and an anti-Roman guerilla fighter named Simon “the Zealot.” How did Jesus keep those two from killing each other? But, early church history tells us the rest of the story- It appears that Matthew headed to North Africa with the message of Jesus and was eventually hacked to death there. After his death who ended up going to the same region to pick up where Matthew left off? You got it, Simon the Zealot. He got crucified. Stunning transformation!

186) The Greek word for “witness” is *martus*. You’re right, it sounds like “martyr” and sort of means that- Someone who would die for what they have to share!

187) The Latin word for “witness” is *testis*. That’s why we say “testimony” and “testify” and “testament.” Yep, you’re right. It kind of gives away how the Roman world felt about the validity of the word of a woman to be believed as evidence. (We’re big boys and girls. You can figure it out for yourself!)

188) Continuing with #188- Little wonder the disciples (three times in Mark 16 alone!) just flat couldn’t believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. After all, what good is the word of a woman?

189) As long as I’m offending half the population (#’s 187 & 188) I might as well finish it. This whole thing is called “criterion of embarrassment.” It’s a proof of the stories of the death and resurrection. After all, if you were to make this stuff up you wouldn’t try to get people to believe that your deity got killed like a criminal and that a bunch of women said he got resurrected! This stuff is so “preposterous” it has to be true as it’s a lousy, weak lie if you made it up!

190) One last element in this vein of the last three or four factoids- If you’ve not let Paul speak to you of it recently go back and read the first dozen verses of I Corinthians 15 again. It feels like Paul is claiming that the resurrection of Jesus is the most important thing that has ever happened in the history of the universe. It’s not just “part of the story.” Without it the whole story is a joke! (I didn’t make that up- argue with Paul!)

191) Pharaoh's question made perfect sense to him. We might wish he was more sensitive to the Holy Spirit but allow the man to be in his life awareness- at least at the beginning. "Who is this God that I should...?" If you are an Egyptian you have a whole pantheon of gods and it's hard to keep it all straight. (After all, that was to be a large part of the religious duty in this life for them- get to know as many of the gods in this life so that you don't get it all confused and offend any in the next one!) But, after one or two plagues Pharaoh should have had his answer.

192) I wish I could expand it for you but take my word for it- To this day a grown man running in the eastern culture of the Bible world was an absolute scandal, something only done in dire emergency. That should put some teeth into two stories- "The Rich Young Ruler" and "The Prodigal Son." In both there's a moment where the grown man just doesn't care about propriety!

193) Malachi ends our "Old Testament" but not so in the traditional Jewish order of Text. You have the books of Moses (*Torah*) and the Prophets (*Neviim*) that concludes with the "Writings" or histories- (*Ketuvim*.) Jesus even referred to that order in Luke 24. II Chronicles ends the "histories/writings" and that explains Luke 11:51. "Abel to Zechariah" wasn't some "A-Z" thing. That doesn't work in Hebrew or Greek! It was a statement of Jesus knowledge of Biblical chronology.

194) Touching on #193- Malachi ends the "Prophets" section of the Hebrew text and was, therefore, considered that last of the teaching prophets. That's why Malachi 4's predicted appearance of Elijah "before the great and terrible day of the Lord" has such a dominant place in the corporate psyche. It's the last predicted thing in the Bible Jesus and Paul held.

195) I'd be curious about your vote. Many Christians have never thought of this- John 3:16 is kind of known by all, right? Who said it? Was it Jesus in a concluding statement to Nicodemus or was it John commenting on what Jesus had just said? (Don't lean on your red letters... that's just someone's opinion.) Look it up!