Question: Does the Bible contradict itself regarding whether Jesus answered Pilate? In John 18:33-34, it says He did answer, but in Matthew 27:13-14, it says He didn’t answer at all. Which one is correct?

Answer: First of all, it’s crucial to understand that the Bible does not contradict itself. The apparent contradictions often come from our own interpretations or misunderstandings. The Bible is a perfect book, inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16), and therefore it contains no errors.

Let’s examine the situation more closely by looking at both passages:

John 18:33-37

In this account, when Pilate asks Jesus if He is the King of the Jews, Jesus answers him directly:

> *John 18:33-34*
> *“Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’*

> *‘Is that your own idea,’ Jesus asked, ‘or did others talk to you about me?’”*

Jesus responds to Pilate, confirming His kingship, but He also adds an important clarification: His kingdom is not of this world. Jesus’ response here shows His divine purpose—His kingdom is not of this earthly realm, but of the spiritual realm (John 18:36). This is a key theological point, revealing that Jesus’ mission is not to establish a political kingdom, but a spiritual one that transcends the world’s systems.

John 18:36

> *“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.’”*

Matthew 27:11-14

Here, when Jesus is questioned by Pilate, the situation seems

different. Pilate asks if He is the King of the Jews, and Jesus responds briefly, “It is as you say.” However, when the chief priests and elders accuse Him, He remains silent.

Matthew 27:12-14

> *“When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.*
> *Then Pilate asked him, ‘Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?’*
> *But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.”*

Jesus’ silence before the chief priests and elders holds deep theological significance. In the Old Testament, the silence of the Messiah before His accusers was prophesied (Isaiah 53:7), and Jesus’ silence fulfilled that prophecy. By remaining silent, Jesus shows His complete submission to God’s will and His willingness to bear the weight of the accusations and the coming suffering without retaliation. This echoes the doctrine of the atonement, where Jesus takes upon Himself the sins of the world, willingly suffering for humanity’s sake (Romans 5:8).

Is There a Contradiction?

No, the Bible is not contradicting itself. Both passages describe the same event, but in different contexts. Let's break it down:

1. First Context (Matthew 27:11):
   When Jesus is first brought before Pilate, Pilate asks Jesus directly, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers briefly, "It is as you say" (meaning, yes, I am). This shows Jesus' acceptance of the title but also His subtle statement that His kingship transcends earthly expectations.
2. Second Context (Matthew 27:12): When the chief priests and elders accuse Jesus of various crimes (such as claiming to be the Son of God), Jesus remains silent. These charges were not genuine inquiries for truth, but were intended to provoke, accuse, and justify His crucifixion. Jesus' silence here emphasizes His role as the sinless Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19), who, without defense, took on the sins of the world.
3. Third Context (Matthew 27:13-14):
   Pilate, puzzled by Jesus' silence, presses Him further, asking, "Don't You hear how many things they testify against You?" Yet Jesus does not answer. This is not because He is unable to respond, but because His silence serves as a testimony to His innocence. Jesus knew that this trial was part of the divine plan for salvation, fulfilling His role as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:3-5).
4. Fourth Context (John 18:33-37):
   Finally, Pilate privately asks Jesus again, "Are You the King of the Jews?" This time, Jesus answers directly, explaining the nature of His kingdom. This conversation between Jesus and Pilate shows that Jesus is in control, calmly explaining the truth of His mission to the Roman governor, while still fulfilling the divine plan for His death.

Why Didn’t Jesus Answer the Accusations?

Jesus didn’t answer the accusations of the religious leaders because they weren’t truly seeking the truth. Their goal was not to understand but to trap Him. This aligns with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God—Jesus knew that the leaders were acting out of malice and evil intent. He chose silence because their hearts were hardened and their questions were not for the sake of understanding, but for condemnation.

In contrast, when Pilate asked Him questions that were more genuinely seeking understanding, Jesus responded. This shows us that there are moments when silence is a powerful choice, especially when engaging with those who are not seeking truth but only seeking to cause harm.

What Can We Learn from This?

From this, we learn that sometimes, staying silent in the face of accusations or provocations is the wisest choice. Jesus answered the questions that sought truth, but He didn’t engage with those who were trying to manipulate the situation or create conflict. This teaches us to discern when to speak and when to remain

silent.

There are times when responding to certain questions or arguments only gives more fuel to the fire. If someone is not genuinely seeking the truth but only trying to create discord, silence may be the best response.

Titus 3:9-10

> *“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.*
> *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.”*

Jesus teaches us that sometimes we must remain silent, especially when those asking the questions are not looking for truth but for an opportunity to argue or cause harm.

God bless you.

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