

THE CHARGE AGAINST RESURRECTION EVENTS

“Now it so happens that the story of Jesus’ resurrection is told by five different writers, whose accounts differ from each other to an astonishing degree.”

-Dr. John Wenham
The Easter Enigma

“The sources contradict one another, and only a ‘harmonizing’ process which is not too much concerned about truth, could patch up a fairly connected account of the events, in which it is only too manifest that the later and less credible witnesses appear more important than the earlier, and more reliable ones. Such a dishonest way of dealing with the subject really has nothing to do with ‘faith in the Word of God’; it only serves to support the disastrous prejudice that Christian faith is only possible in connection with historical dishonesty.”

-Emil Brunner
Swiss theologian

SOME ISSUES OF EASTER DAY

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Women at the tomb	2	3	5	1
Visit to the tomb	Dawn	Sun had risen	Dawn	Still dark
Messengers at tomb	Angels - 1	Men	Men	Angels - 2
Messengers location	Outside then in	Inside	Inside	Inside
Women encounter with Jesus	Held Christ	Nothing	Nothing	Told not to touch Christ
Women told	Disciples	No one	Disciples and others	Only Mary M told disciples
Appearance to the 11	1 - Galilee	1 - Jerusalem	1 - Jerusalem	2 - Jerusalem



Two truths to keep in mind when reading Biblical narratives:

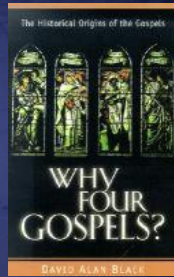
- (1) A partial report is not a false report.
- (2) Divergent accounts are not false accounts.

"Several years ago the mother of a friend of ours was killed. We first learned of the death through a trust mutual friend who reported that the woman had been standing on the corner of the street at a bus intersection waiting for a bus and had been hit by another bus passing by and was fatally hurt, dying a few minutes thereafter. Later, we learned from the grandson that she had been involved in a collision, was thrown from the car in which she was riding and was killed instantly. Now which would you believe?

Much later we learned that the woman had been waiting for a bus, was hit by another bus and was fatally hurt. She had been picked up by a passing car, dashed to the hospital, but in this haste, the car in which she was being transported to the hospital collided with another, she was thrown from the car and died instantly."

- Dr. Kenneth Kantzer

We must remember there are four gospels, with four different authors, all inspired by the Holy Spirit to convey a certain message. The fact that they do not fit together perfectly testifies to their independent authentic testimony. If they were cookie-cutter replicas of each other, we would claim collusion. Finally, the fact that the general order and core events are all contained within the gospels represents what we would hope for in a credible account.



TIMELINE OF THE RESURRECTION EVENTS

RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

Appeared to	Where	When	References
1 Mary Magdalene	Jerusalem	Sunday	Mark 6:9-11; John 20:11-18
2 Other Women	Jerusalem	Sunday	Matt 28:9-10
3 Peter	Jerusalem	Sunday	Luke 24:32; 1 Cor. 15:5
4 Emmaus disciples	Emmaus	Sunday	Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12
5 10 disciples	Jerusalem	Sunday	Mark 16:14; Luke 24:26-42; John 20:19-29
6 11 disciples	Jerusalem	A week later	John 20:26-31; 1 Cor. 15:5
7 7 disciples	Galilee	?	John 21:1-25
8 500 brethren	Galilee	?	1 Cor. 15:6
9 James	?	?	1 Cor. 15:7
10 11 disciples	Galilee	?	Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18
11 11 disciples	Jerusalem	40 days later	Acts 1:3-12

THE START TO EASTER



"And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men." (Matthew 28:2-4)

The angel comes, rolls away the stone, terrifies the guards who initially faint but then recover/reawaken and leave to tell the chief priests what they saw. Matt. 28:2-4 would contain brackets to signify a historical account in our writing.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE WOMEN



"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'" (Mark 16:1-3)

THE ARRIVAL OF THE WOMEN

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
"Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave." (Matthew 28:1)	"Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen." (Mark 16:2)	"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." (Luke 24:1)	"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb." (John 20:1)

Mark is not referring to full morning, but very early morning as the others. Note also that it could have been undeniably dark when the women first set out and then become light as they arrived at the tomb, especially if their starting point was Bethany, which some theologians believe.

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John is not saying only Mary Magdalene came, but is rather putting the spotlight on her and highlighting her experience. The fact that she was not alone is spelled out in his next statement where he says, "So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."" (John 20:2).

THE ANGELIC ENCOUNTER

"The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee; there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."" (Matthew 28:5-7)

"Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you." (Mark 16:5-7)

"but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." And they remembered His words." (Luke 24:3-8)

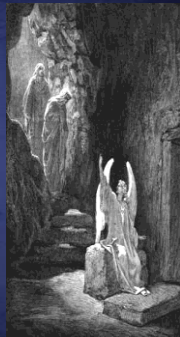
THE ANGELIC ENCOUNTER

Mary Magdalene leaves to go tell Peter and John about the empty tomb. The other Mary is joined by Salome, Susanna, and Joanna who arrive possibly from the Hasmonean palace.

The women enter the tomb and angels appear to them. Matthew's account does not occur outside the tomb but in (he does not say which but the other accounts do).

Luke's "stood by" does not contradict with Mark's "sitting" because Luke's Greek term oftentimes means "to be present" or "appear".

The messages given are indeed different, but not contradictory; rather they are complementary. The writers are highlighting the aspects of the message they want their reader to know.



THE ANGELIC ENCOUNTER

The women would have likely been too frightened to enter the tomb had the angels' presence already been manifest, so the angels waited until the women came into the tomb to make their appearance.

Luke specifically reports two angels were present, while Matthew and Mark only highlight the one angel that spoke to the women. It is a fact that where there are two of anything, there is certainly one. The one angel evidently sat on the tombstone until the guards either fainted or left then disappeared or reappeared later.

This is not unusual; the same type of episode occurs with the Gadara demoniacs (Matt. 8:28) and the two blind men at Jericho (Matt. 20:30).



THE WOMEN'S DEPARTURE & REPORT

"And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples." (Matthew 28:8)

"They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." (Mark 16:8)

"And they remembered His words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest."
(Luke 24:8-9)

Mark says the women said nothing to anyone, however this likely refers to their journey back to the disciples or for a short period of time, and does not mean they kept silent of the event forever.

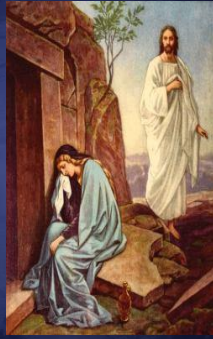
PETER AND JOHN'S ARRIVAL

"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.' So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their own homes."

(John 20:1-10; cf. Luke 24:12)

MARY MAGDALENE'S ENCOUNTER

"But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping, and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni' (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her." (John 20:11-18)



THE OTHER WOMEN'S ENCOUNTER



"And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.'" (Matthew 28:8-10)

THE BRIBING OF THE GUARDS

"Now while they [the women] were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.' And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day." (Matthew 28:11-15)



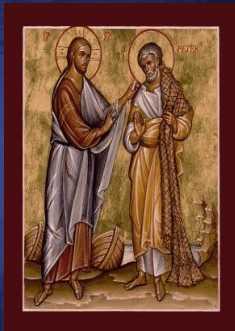
“You have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that ... his disciples stole him by night from the tomb.”
-Justin Martyr, A.D. 155
Disputation with Trypho the Jew

JESUS APPEARANCE TO PETER

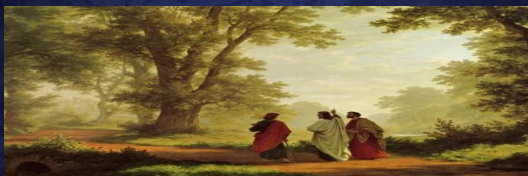
“and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”
(1 Corinthians 15:4-5).

“And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.””(Luke 24:33-34)

The specifics of Christ appearing to Peter are not given in the Gospel accounts, but its fact and timing can be inferred from the above verses.



THE ROAD TO EMMAUS



“And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. . . . When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.”(Luke 24:13-16, 30-31)

"It is often said that it was those with expectant faith who saw Jesus. The gospel accounts indicate just the opposite. While there is no evidence that Jesus appeared to any unbeliever there is abundant evidence that he appeared to disciples who were **not** in a state of eager expectation and who did **not** quickly believe that it was he."

- Dr. John Wenham

The Easter Enigma, pg. 105

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS



"After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country."
(Mark 16:12)

Why was Jesus not immediately recognizable to Mary Magdalene, Cleopas and his companion, and why were the disciples hesitant to accept it was Him? The Scripture says that God simply prevented it at the time, plus His body was different in certain ways. The disciples seem to have been awed to the point of non-belief; it doesn't seem that Jesus didn't appear to be who He normally looked like.


THE APPEARANCE TO THE 10 DISCIPLES



"While they [Emmaus travelers] were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "I have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."
(Luke 24:36-44)

RESURRECTION EVENTS AFTER EASTER

THE APPEARANCE TO THE 11 DISCIPLES



But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:24-28)

THE APPEARANCE TO THE 7 DISCIPLES

After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish." (John 21:1-8)

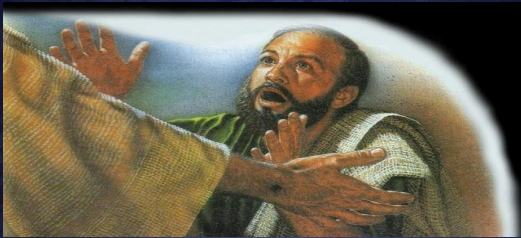
THE APPEARANCE TO THE 500+



"The eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful."(Matthew 28:16-17)

"After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;"(1 Corinthians 15:6)

JESUS APPEARS TO JAMES



"then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;"(1 Corinthians 15:7)

It seems that the apostles were a body wider than the previously mentioned twelve, but were all distinguished by having seen the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 9:1) which made Paul the last of their company. It may also refer to Christ's ascension account.

JESUS LAST APPEARANCE IN JERUSALEM

"Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
(Acts 1:4-8)

JESUS' ASCENSION

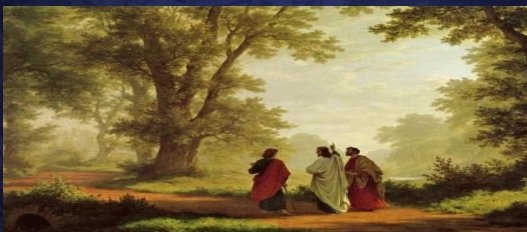


"And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God."
(Luke 24:50-53)

RESURRECTION EVENTS – EASTER MORNING

1. Angel rolls away stone from tomb before sunrise (Matt. 28:2-4). The guards are seized with fear and eventually flee
2. Women disciples visit tomb and discover Christ missing (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1)
3. Mary Magdalene leaves to tell Peter and John (John 20:1-2)
4. Other women remain at tomb; they see two angels who tell them of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 18:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8)
5. Peter and John run to the tomb and then leave (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10)
6. Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb; Christ appears to her (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18). **Christ's First Appearance**
7. Jesus appears to the other women (Mary, mother of James, Salome, and Joanna) (Matt. 28:8-10). **Christ's Second Appearance**
8. At this time, the guards report the events to the religious leaders and are bribed to lie (Matt. 28:11-15)
9. Jesus privately appears to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5). **Christ's Third Appearance**

RESURRECTION EVENTS – EASTER DAY



10. Jesus appears to Cleopas and companion (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32). **Christ's Fourth Appearance**
11. Jesus appears to 10 apostles, with Thomas missing, in the Upper Room (Luke 24:36-43). **Christ's Fifth Appearance**

RESURRECTION EVENTS – NEXT 39 DAYS

- 12. Eight days after His appearance to the 10 apostles, Jesus appears to all 11 apostles, including Thomas (John 20:26-28). **Christ's Sixth Appearance**
- 13. Jesus appears to 7 disciples by the Sea of Galilee and performs the miracle of the fish (John 21:1-14). **Christ's Seventh Appearance**
- 14. Jesus appears to 500 on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:6) **Christ's Eighth Appearance**
- 15. Jesus appears to half-brother James (1 Cor. 15:7). **Christ's Ninth Appearance**
- 16. In Jerusalem, Jesus appears again to His disciples (Acts 1:3-8). **Christ's Tenth Appearance**
- 17. Jesus ascends into Heaven while the disciples look on (Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12). **Christ's Eleventh Appearance**

“So ends an investigation which we believe has shown that the charge of irreconcilability brought against the resurrection stories has not been proved. Rather it has shown that these records exhibit the characteristics of accurate and independent reporting, for superficially they show great disharmony, but on close examination the details gradually fall into place.”

-Dr. John Wenham
The Easter Enigma, pg. 124

THE THIRD DAY

ARE THE RESURRECTION EVENTS IN CONFLICT?
