

The Harmony of the Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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Note: All Scriptures are from the New King James Translation unless otherwise indicated

For centuries, critics of the Bible have claimed that the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) contain contradictory accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which casts doubt on their reliability as witnesses to the resurrection. But *are* the four accounts contradictory? Or can the apparent inconsistencies be reconciled with a more careful reading of the texts? I believe the answer to the last question is a resounding **yes!** Here, I will show how these accounts can be logically reconciled to reveal a coherent, consistent, compelling, and accurate historic documentation of the greatest miracle of all time – the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The following table displays the four accounts of the resurrection side-by-side. My narration provides an explanation for the flow and sequencing of the accounts. As you will see, this format produces one complete historical record of what transpired in Jerusalem during resurrection Sunday nearly 2,000 years ago. Few would argue that the purported resurrection of Jesus has not impacted human history, and fewer still would deny that millions have testified (to their death) that a resurrected Jesus is the reason for their own transformation as they became biblical Christians. It is my prayer that those who read this chronology will respond to the Easter greeting of, “He is risen!” with a booming, “He is risen *indeed!*”

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<p>Matthew 27:58-61: This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.</p>	<p>Mark 15:43-47: Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid.</p>	<p>Luke 23:50-55: Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.</p>	<p>John 19:38-42: After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.</p>

From these accounts we learn that a member of the ruling counsel of the Jews (Sanhedrin), a man named Joseph of Arimathea, was the one to place the body of Jesus into an unused tomb. Joseph, with the help of fellow counsel member Nicodemus, wrapped Jesus' body with linen and spices according to the tradition of the day.

Jesus died on the Jewish Passover, the 14th Day of Nisan. In Jesus' day, Nisan 14 was referred to as the Preparation Day (for Passover week). Earlier verses explained the urgency to bury Jesus, and it is important to know why.

The 15th day of Nisan was the beginning of the week-long Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4-7). It began at sunset and was a special Sabbath day (High Sabbath – John 19:31) according to Jewish law. This first day of Unleavened Bread was also the beginning of Passover week, even though the *literal* Passover is on the day *before* the week-long feast. Joseph and Nicodemus knew that Jesus' burial needed to be completed before sunset on Nisan 14 in order to avoid violating the Nisan 15 High Sabbath. Those who lack the understanding of Jewish Feasts and the special Sabbaths associated with those feasts have mistakenly assumed that Jesus died on Friday, the day before the traditional weekly (Saturday) Sabbath. He did not.

In the year that Jesus died, Nisan 14 was on a Wednesday for reasons explained below. So the Nisan 15 High Sabbath was on a Thursday (which began at sunset on Wednesday). Remember that this is the first day of Unleavened Bread but is also referred to as the beginning of the Passover week. Now read the following verses in Mark and Luke:

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:1: Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.	Luke 23:56: Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.	

The women likely noticed that the men in their haste had not taken the time to properly prepare the body of Jesus for burial. So they plan to return to the tomb to complete the customary burial preparations as soon as they could after the High Sabbath. But first they must leave the tomb to return to their homes before sunset to celebrate the High Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread (Thursday) with their families.

When Friday (the day after the High Sabbath and a normal work day) arrives, the women go out to purchase spices in preparation for entering the tomb *after* the next day which is the customary Saturday Sabbath or as Luke describes, “*the Sabbath according to the commandment*”. The women did not attempt to enter the tomb on Friday because guards were stationed at the tomb as described in Matthew's account below (According to this passage, it is logical to conclude that the guards would have kept everyone, including these women, from entering the tomb for the full three days and nights after Jesus' burial.). Further, the women would not be able to do any work on the customary Saturday Sabbath and therefore would not have attempted to enter the tomb on Saturday. Therefore, Sunday was the earliest day they could have expected to be able to complete the burial practices of the Jews, so this becomes their plan.

Mark says the women bought/prepared spices after the Sabbath and Luke says they did so before the Sabbath. It is impossible to reconcile this apparent contradiction without the understanding that Mark is talking about the High Sabbath of Nisan 15 while Luke is talking about the normal Saturday Sabbath (as he says, “*the Sabbath according to the commandment*” – meaning the Ten Commandments); and the two Sabbaths are separated by a normal work day (Friday – which allowed the women to buy and prepare the spices). Therefore, a Thursday or Friday death of Jesus is problematic or impossible, Jesus must have died on a Wednesday.

Some reject the idea of a Wednesday crucifixion because in 33AD the Passover did not fall on a Wednesday, but instead was on Thursday. I would like to make two rebuttals to this argument.

(1) Jesus did not die in AD 33. People who hold to this view ignore the evidence that the Gregorian calendar is in error. There is strong evidence that Herod the Great died about 4 BC and Matthew makes it clear that Jesus was alive before Herod's death (Jesus may have even been two years old based on Herod killing all the male children of Bethlehem who were two years old and under - Matthew 2:16). If Jesus began His ministry when He was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23), and as most will agree - ministered for three and a half years before being crucified, then Jesus' death (at thirty three years old) was closer to AD 29. So when was the Passover on or about AD 29? The answer to this question is my second point.

(2) There is no way to positively know when Passover was on AD 29, or AD 33, or any year in great antiquity. The Jewish records of the Temple were destroyed in AD 70 and attempts to go back in time to reconstruct Passover dates cannot be assured with 100% certainty. After researching this question, Dr. David Reagan concluded that Jesus died on the Wednesday Passover of AD 31.¹ This date is certainly much closer to the actual crucifixion date than AD 33, and if Passover was on Wednesday in that year, then I would agree with Dr. Reagan that this was the actual year of Jesus' death.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 27:62-66: On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.			

Only Matthew records what the religious leaders were doing on Friday (the day after the Thursday High Sabbath) while the women were buying and preparing spices in preparation for going to the tomb on the day after the customary Saturday Sabbath.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:2-4: And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.			

Again, only Matthew gives this detail about what happened before the women arrived early Sunday morning. I am placing verses 2 through 4 before verse 1 because these events occurred chronologically before verse 1. Matthew put this out of chronology so the reader would know this event happened on Sunday (probably right after sunset on Saturday) and not Friday which was the time frame of the previous verses, Chapter 27:62-66.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
			John 20:1: Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

John records that it was Mary Magdalene who arrived first (and apparently alone) at the garden tomb area while it was still dark. She may have awakened early and thought that it was closer to sunrise than it actually was. (There were no watches and alarm clocks then!)

Mary would have traveled to the tomb by moonlight – it was only three days past the full moon – and if it were a clear night, she may have observed from a distance that the stone had been moved. The soldiers may have also still been there. If they were, they soon leave as Matthew records in a later verse (Matthew 28:11).

Mary may have been fearful to approach any nearer to the tomb alone, so she waits until someone else arrives. Matthew records that it was the "other Mary" who is next to join Mary Magdalene. Comparing Matthew 27:61 and Mark 15:47, this "other Mary" was likely Mary, the mother of Jesus.

¹ "The Resurrection of Jesus in Prophecy: Did the resurrection fulfill the prophecy of Jonah?," Online at: <http://www.raptureready.com/featured/reagan/dr14.html>

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:1: Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.			

With the arrival of the second Mary, the two of them drew closer to the tomb with the stone rolled away. It is still very early because first light was only now beginning to appear.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:5-8: But the angel [that rolled away the stone and had frightened the guards as recorded in verses 3 and 4] answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.			

The same angel who rolled away the stone and frightened the guards is now startling the two Marys who were the first to arrive at the tomb on that remarkable Sunday. (Others are soon to arrive.) The angel commands them to go and tell the disciples.

John then records how Mary Magdalene obeyed this command by running to tell Peter and John the news. We can tell from the following verses that Mary Magdalene and the “other Mary” must have parted as they left the tomb, which makes sense since they certainly would have wanted to spread the angel’s message quickly.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
			John 20:2: Then she [Mary Magdalene] ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple [John], 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.”

When Mary Magdalene told John and Peter that “they” have taken away the Lord, she may not have been referring to people but to the angel(s) who had already informed her that Jesus had risen.

It is not a stretch to paraphrase this verse to say, “*John and Peter, the other Mary and I arrived at the tomb very early and found the stone rolled away. As we approached, we saw an angel who told us not to be afraid and that Jesus was no longer in the tomb because He had risen from the dead. He then told us that we were to go and tell you that Jesus is alive. There was another angel at the tomb, too. The angels didn’t tell us what they did with Jesus, only that He was alive and no longer in the tomb, so we don’t know where Jesus is.*”

It is quite possible that although Matthew emphasizes the one angel who rolled away the stone, Mary may have been aware of the other angel(s) who were also present; thus she uses the term “they.” It is easy to imagine that Mary (although being told Jesus was alive) would have thought Jesus had been taken somewhere to lie down rather than being fully healed and glorified after suffering death on the cross. That is why she told John and Peter that she didn’t know where the angels “laid” Him. It is also possible that she started to question the angel(s) message that Jesus was alive and instead thought that they had moved the body to a different location, in the same way Michael the Archangel hid the body of Moses (compare Deuteronomy 34:6 with Jude 9). If this were the case, doubt must have crept in after her initial joy (Matthew 28:8).

There is one other possible explanation for Mary’s choice of words when telling John and Peter what had happened at the tomb. Although the angel’s “*countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow*” (Matthew 28:3) when he rolled away the stone with the guards present, he may have changed his appearance to that of a man when the two Marys arrived. There are several instances in Scripture where angels are mistaken for human men (Genesis 19, for example). If this were the case, Mary would have simply been telling John and Peter what “they” (thinking “they” were men) had told her. The accounts of Mark and Luke, which document what the other two groups of women experienced that morning, increase the likelihood that this was indeed the case.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:11-15: Now while they [Mary Magdalene and the other Mary] were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.			

These verses are placed before verses 9 and 10 for chronological clarity. Matthew states that as the two Marys ran to tell the disciples, the soldiers approach their superiors in Jerusalem to tell them that the tomb they were ordered to guard had been opened by an angelic being. Notice that the religious leaders believe the soldiers’ account. Otherwise, they would have turned them over to the Romans for execution and spared no expense in helping the Romans find the body of Jesus by interrogating and killing those responsible for the grave robbery and associated hoax.

Had the rulers (Jewish and Roman) ordered interrogations and executions, their failure to produce Jesus’ body would have only made the resurrection story even more believable to the people. Therefore, the decision by the religious elders to pay the soldiers to lie and not launch an investigation was the wisest course in attempting to cover up the truth that Jesus did indeed raise from the grave.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:2: Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.	Luke 24:1: Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.	

After the two Marys had already visited the tomb and left to tell the others (as recorded in Matthew and John), two other groups of women arrive as they had planned on Friday to do. Mark records the events of one group, while Luke records the other. These women may not have known that the two Marys had already been to the tomb and left. Apparently (from the following passages), the second group arrived and departed before the third group arrived, and each group had a slightly different encounter with the angels who were still at the tomb. It is not possible to know which group arrived before the other, so we will consider both accounts together.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:3-5: And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away — for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.	Luke 24:2-5: But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth.	

Mark records that one group of women begins to wonder how the stone of the tomb was going to be moved. This seems odd considering they were fully aware that the stone must be moved for them to enter the tomb, and moving this huge stone was no job for women! Why did they not consider this earlier? A reasonable explanation is that the women were depending on the guards to help them move the stone. They almost certainly would have known that Pilate’s edict was that the tomb was to be sealed and guarded for *three days and three nights*. Since Jesus died on Wednesday and had been in the tomb for three days and nights (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) by now, the soldiers would have been permitted to break the seal and allow the women to enter. But as this group of women near the tomb, they notice that the soldiers are already gone and so become concerned about how to move the stone. As they get closer still, they realize the stone has also *already* been moved, and they enter the tomb.

Mark’s group of women is met by an angel that appears to them as a young man in a long white robe. They apparently notice him before they notice that the body of Jesus is missing. The other group (recorded by Luke) first discovers that the tomb of Jesus is empty and then are frightened by two angels, also appearing to them as men, in shining garments.

These accounts by Mark and Luke are not contradictory, but rather complementary. They are the historical records of what actually happened on Resurrection Sunday as various groups of women arrived on that glorious morning.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:6-7: But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”	Luke 24:5-7:--- They said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’”	

Mark records the angels saying that Jesus would not show Himself to at least some of the disciples until He met them in Galilee. This is important in understanding where some of the appearances recorded in the Gospels actually took place. As we will see, Thomas did not see Jesus until he was in Galilee.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:8: So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.	Luke 24:8-10: And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, <i>and the other women with them</i> , who told these things to the apostles.	

Mark records that as the women quickly dispersed to tell the other disciples, they did not tell those they would have certainly encountered along the way. Luke records that there were several women involved in discovering the empty tomb that morning, and that all of them went on to tell the male disciples of Jesus’ resurrection.

Jesus had told the disciples that he would be betrayed, abused, and killed, but they did not believe Him. In fact, it had been so unbelievable to them that they had pushed the warning by Jesus completely out of their mind and did not remember until the angels reminded them.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
		Luke 24:11-12: And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.	John 20:2-10: Then she [Mary Magdalene] 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.” Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple [John], and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

John records that it was Mary Magdalene who told Peter and John about the empty tomb, so the two Marys must have separated when they left after being told by the angel that Jesus was raised. From the following verses, we can deduce that after Mary told Peter and John, she followed them back to the tomb. Since the men were running, they likely reached the tomb before Mary Magdalene arrived for the second time. If Mary arrived before they left, she stayed and wept rather than returning with them to their homes. (Apparently, the other two groups of women arrived and left before Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene arrived). It is possible that Jesus revealed

himself to Peter while Peter returned to his house from the tomb. 1 Cor 15:5 states that Jesus “was seen by Cephas, **then** by the twelve”. This means that Peter either saw Jesus on the way home or that he was the first to see Jesus when he appeared to the others as recorded by John 20:19-23, or at some time between these two events that is not recorded.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
			John 20:11-13: But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then 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.”

After John and Peter leave, Mary has another angelic visitation inside the tomb. It is not enough for Mary to know that Jesus is alive. She wants to see Him, and Mark gives us a clue as to why.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:9: Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.		John 20:14-17: Now 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?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, 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, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”

Jesus had taught that those who are forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47). We do not know much about Mary of Magdalene’s past, but her sinful lifestyle left her vulnerable to be possessed of seven demons, all of which Jesus cast out. As a result, Mary had a deeper appreciation for Jesus than the other disciples, and she was more deeply distressed, not knowing where He had gone.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:10-11: She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.		John 20:18: Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

Mary’s first trip to the disciples was to tell them that the tomb was empty. Now she goes to tell all the disciples that she has seen the risen Lord. Due to the absurdity of the claim, and the fact that the news is coming from a women, the men do not believe her. (Women were not considered credible witnesses in that culture.)

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:9-10: And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”			

Matthew does not record that Jesus appeared to the two Marys while they were together, only that He appeared to both of them. We know from Mark that Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdalene. Therefore, sometime after Jesus first appeared to her at the empty tomb, Jesus also appeared to the “other Mary” as she was on her own mission to tell the disciples. Her reaction was similar to that of Mary Magdalene’s.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
			John 20:19-23: Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

By this time, the disciples have heard that the resurrected Jesus has appeared to Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joses, but they do not believe the women. Peter and John are also able to testify that the tomb is indeed empty. Therefore, they have good reason to fear for the reasons I alluded to earlier. If someone had stolen the body, then the disciples would know the Romans and religious leaders would be coming to them first to find out what they did with the body of Jesus. Since the disciples did not know where the body was, they would not be able to produce the body for the Romans, no matter how much they would have been threatened or tortured. They also knew that the Romans would not believe them, resulting in the disciple's immediate execution when the interrogation/torture was completed.

The resurrected Jesus again shows compassion to his unbelieving disciples by appearing in their midst to prove that He *is* alive and they have nothing to fear. At this time the disciples, receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. Seven weeks later, on Pentecost, they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Although the disciples of this group are not named (and may not even be "the eleven"), one was probably Peter (as deduced from a later conversation of two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus). If Peter was not at this appearance, then Jesus must have appeared to him when he was alone sometime between the time Peter returned from the tomb and the meeting between Jesus and the two men described by Luke (See 1 Corinthians 15:5).

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Mark 16:12-13: After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.	Luke 24:13-16: Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.	

Mark and Luke record that Jesus also appeared to two disciples as they walked on the road to Emmaus. It is likely that this encounter happens immediately after Jesus had appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem since both events happen during the evening hours of Sunday. Mark and Luke say that Jesus appeared in "another form" so that these two disciples did not at first recognize Jesus. Mark records that the two "told it to the rest" meaning the rest of the disciples in Jerusalem (where they returned to according to Luke). But the disciples they told did not believe these two witnesses.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
		Luke 24:17-24: And He [Jesus] said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."	

Luke records how the entire city of Jerusalem is aware of the life and death of Jesus, and of the rumors that the tomb of Jesus is empty. These two disciples must have left for Emmaus before hearing about Jesus' appearance to the two Marys and the room full of disciples.

Luke records (verse 21) that the two disciples told Jesus that Sunday was the *third day since these things happened*. Since we don't know the starting point of "these things" we cannot say that this conflicts with the rest of the chronology given in this explanation. They could have meant the third day since/after the High Sabbath day of the Passover week (Thursday), since this would have been the first day (Friday) that the disciples would have really allowed the death of Jesus to sink in.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
		Luke 24:25-32: Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"	

Jesus rebukes these disciples for not understanding all of the prophecies pertaining to the Messiah, especially that he must suffer and die before He can "redeem Israel."

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
		Luke 24:33-34: So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"	

Jesus must have told them to go back to Jerusalem and to tell the others, and must have also said that He had already appeared to Peter. Everyone would have known that Peter had denied Jesus and would have been comforted to hear that Jesus did not condemn him for doing so. Therefore, as the two disciples gathered with the eleven, they were able to prove they had seen the risen Lord Jesus by saying they knew (because Jesus told them) that Jesus had appeared to Peter, something Peter would have then confirmed to the others if they were not already aware.

Matt	Mark	Luke	John
		<p>Luke 24:35-48: And they told about the things that had happened on the road and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.</p> <p>Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.</p> <p>But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.</p> <p>Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.</p> <p>Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.</p>	

Although Luke records that the two disciples had “found the eleven” and were explaining what had happened along the road when Jesus appeared, it is clear from John (below) that Thomas had left the group before Jesus appeared.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
			John 20:24-25: Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

It was at this time that the disciples obey Jesus and depart for Galilee to wait for Him. Thomas is the only one of the eleven who has not yet seen the risen Jesus. He refuses to believe even though two women, the other ten disciples/apostles, and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and possibly others have all testified that they have seen the risen Jesus.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:16-17: Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.	Mark 16:14: Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.		John 20:26-29: And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Matthew, Mark, and John all record Jesus’ appearance to all eleven disciples at one time in the area of Galilee. This happened eight days after His appearances in Jerusalem on Sunday. They all were still living in some form of doubt, but Thomas is singled out by Jesus for rebuke because of his unbelief.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Matthew 28:18-10: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.	Mark 16:15-16: And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.	Luke 24:49-53: Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.	John 20:30-31: And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Only John (Chapter 21) records the next appearance of Jesus at the see of Galilee, where Jesus challenges Peter to “Feed My sheep.”

In summary, I pray the reader finds that the above narrative (containing every verse of the resurrection account found in the gospels) presents a very plausible sequence of events during those amazing days nearly two thousand years ago.

If so, then the reader should be convinced that there are no contradictions between the four gospel writers, despite what the uninformed critics have said. If you have rejected the God of the Bible because of these critics, or any number of others who are equally deceiving about other Bible topics, then I pray you will reconsider your opposition to God and instead admit that you have been deceived.

Instead of listening to those spreading deception, pick up the Bible and read God's love letter for yourself. God inspired it to be written for you and anyone else who will come to Him by faith. As you read God's Word, you will see that you have fallen short of perfection and have sinned against Him. Confess this to God and repent of your sin, turn toward God and His law, and like the Apostle Thomas, fall at Jesus' feet confessing that you want to receive Him as your Lord and Savior. If you do, then the power of Jesus' resurrection will flood into your soul, giving you eternal life as an adopted child of God.

Then next Resurrection Sunday you will be able to respond to the greeting of, "He is risen!" with a heartfelt, "He is risen indeed!"

I welcome any input that would improve or correct anything written above.

In service to Jesus till He comes again for those who love Him,

Pastor Kevin Lea

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