



Contradictions (Part IV): Why So Many Contradictions Surrounding Jesus' Resurrection?

Luke 24:6: (NASB) *He is not here, but he has risen. Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilee.*

Special Guest: Tom Ruggirello



Ask any Christian and they will tell you one of the greatest - if not THE greatest - event in all biblical history is the resurrection of Jesus after his crucifixion. We laud this event as the undeniable guarantee that God's plan for the world's salvation is entirely unstoppable. This event not only sealed the ransom payment as received, it also sealed the fate of Satan as well. With so much riding on this event, one would think the narrative given to us in Scripture would be the most crystal clear account in the entire Bible. This is NOT the case. The event is recorded by all four gospels, and each of them seems to contradict the others. Why? Those who seek to destroy the Bible's credibility are quick to say these discrepancies are proof of the Bible's fallibility. Are they? Let's take them one at a time and find out.

Tom has been with us on several previous episodes.

(Tom's comments will be shown in purple and may be edited for content or brevity.)

I have been an elder with the Chicago Bible Students for about 35 years. I give sermons, lead Bible studies and teach the Scriptures. I love the Gospel, just like you do, and my life is devoted to it. I happened to give a sermon recently that touched on some of today's subjects.



HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH BIBLE STUDY WHEN IT COMES TO QUESTIONS LIKE THESE?

First, we have to understand it is okay to raise questions. If we are searching for the truth, questions are a good way to arrive at it.

But if our questions are only meant to find fault and undermine to destroy something, then not only are we going to be missing the truth that is there, we are going to be hurting other people. We don't want to miss the beauty there with these little, I call them, "pebbles" of criticism, because I think there are answers for all the criticisms.

I might mention at this point that Jesus spoke in parables, and when he told all these stories and people just weren't getting it, the disciples asked, "Why do you speak in parables?" His answer in Matthew 13 was interesting. He said, "Because I don't want them to believe." That is amazing! Why wouldn't he want them to believe? The answer was because he was searching for those who wanted to dig deeper and find the answers, who weren't just there for the loaves and fishes but wanted to know the truth and were willing to search.



Check out our CQ Kids video: "Why Did Jesus Speak in Parables?"



This is an important principle when we come to analyzing criticisms of the Scriptures.

Specifically about the accounts we are going to look at in this episode, some of the critics will look at one account and compare it to another. We have to understand when one account does not give all the facts another account gives, it does not mean they are in conflict. It just means someone emphasized one fact over the other. When there are multiple eyewitnesses, there will naturally be different perspectives. We should expect some slight variations. In fact, I think the variations support authenticity. This is an important point to keep in mind as we start comparing the different accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

The four biblical accounts in question are:

MATTHEW 28:1-10
MARK 16:1-8
LUKE 24:1-12
JOHN 20:1-18

ALWAYS SEEK THE LARGER CONTEXT BEYOND ANY SINGLE ACCOUNT.
REMEMBER, VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES ENHANCE TRUE UNDERSTANDING.

The more eyewitnesses to an account we have, the better picture we will get. Rather than seeing these as conflicts, let's see them as complimentary eyewitness accounts and put the accounts together. By doing this, we will get the bigger picture.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



Who were
the first
visitors
to the tomb?



Who were the first visitors to the tomb?

Matthew - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary:

Matthew 28:1: (NASB) *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.*

Mark - Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James) and Salome:

Mark 16:1: (NASB) *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.*

Luke - Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James), Joanna and other women (at least five total):

Luke 24:10: (NASB) *Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.*

John - Mary Magdalene:

John 20:1: (NASB) *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb.*



There are four gospels with four different answers about who was there. Who is right?

The answer is, they are all right. First, here is a simple solution to the John account. The John account is not describing the same event as Matthew, Mark and Luke. And so it doesn't have to be the same. It doesn't have to match. John is describing *Mary Magdalene's SECOND visit*. Automatically that resolves the problem of why John's account is different.

The Matthew, Mark and Luke accounts all describe the same women, just not in the same detail. Luke provides the most detailed account, but notice the first name mentioned in each account is Mary Magdalene, suggesting she is the predominant one. She is the one leading the party and is a significant person.

This is probably why Matthew includes her first with just the other Mary, just the two Marys; whereas, Luke, he was a physician and more detailed, he gives a fuller account, but even he doesn't name them all. He names three of them, and then says, *and other women*. We can assume from that there were at least two other women, but it may have been more. We can see this was not meant to be a detailed account. If it was, we would have had the names of all five, six or seven women who were there. I think it is an easy resolution.



We conclude there were at least five women who first came to the tomb.

Why the differences in each gospel as to who was recorded to have been there?

It is interesting these are secondhand accounts. If we had firsthand accounts, the women who were actually there would have written them. But the fact that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their stories means they were interviewing these women. I imagine maybe Matthew interviewed one, Mark interviewed another and Luke interviewed another. From the five women who were there, maybe they would have listed them differently. But realize there's a lot we don't know that's not written. We have to surmise.

I think of the women who were there, Mary Magdalene is the most significant one. Who else was there is not a detail we have to get hung up on, because it is not that important. The important point, of course, is the resurrection, and that there were eyewitnesses to it.

The Gospel of Matthew: Predominantly written to specifically prove Jesus came and fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. He was a compiler who put the proofs together.

The Gospel of Mark: Written from more of an action standpoint. He records a lot of what Jesus did more so than what he said.

The Gospel of Luke: The physician puts the events in sequence.

The Gospel of John: Gives us the sense of the people, feeling and experience.

We have four different approaches to the same event, giving us four different flavors of the same event.



What time did they come to the tomb?

Matthew - as it began to dawn:

Matthew 28:1: (NASB) *Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week...*

Mark - very early in the morning...at the rising of the sun:

Mark 16:2: (NASB) *Very early....they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.*

Luke - very early in the morning:

Luke 24:1: (NASB) *But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb....*

John - when it was yet dark:

John 20:1: (NASB) *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came **early <4404>** to the tomb, while it was still dark.*

Early: Online Greek English Lexicon #4404 and Thayer's Dictionary:

1) in the morning, early; 2) the fourth watch of the night, from 3 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock approximately

I go back to the point I made earlier. These are probably five women who are describing the morning, all using different words. I don't think that's a big problem. The John account seems to be the issue - *while it was still dark*. But notice it said it was *early*. They came early to the tomb - it wasn't midnight. It wasn't two in the morning; it was early in the morning. In Strong's Greek Dictionary, it says it could be translated "dimness or obscurity." That perfectly describes when the sun is just coming up. I don't get up that early often, but when I do, there is a dimness when the sun hasn't come up yet.

If they were trying to be precise, they would tell you what time it was in the morning. The fact they are giving just a general description shows they are not trying to be precise. They just want you to know this was at dawn.

For the critics who say the Bible isn't being precise, no, it's not. It is not trying to be; it is painting a picture. From these accounts we understand there are at least five women, at the crack of dawn early in the morning.

Let's not miss the point of who is doing this and when. This is the day after the Sabbath. They couldn't do this on the Sabbath, so they came first thing in the morning on Sunday. It shows the depth of how much they cared for our Lord, that they were willing to continue to serve him even while he's lying in the tomb...at least they thought he was lying there.



They were not to work on the Sabbath. The fact it was the day after and they were going to set about their work at the earliest possible dawning, shows their faithfulness to him.

If we get hung up on the words *it was still dark*, we will miss that beautiful point of dedication here. These women were devoted to him with their lives.



At the crack of dawn.

**We know who was at the tomb and when.
What and whom did they see?**

It is in this part of the account that a few glaring potential challenges arise. We have already talked about the expected differences in eyewitness accounts, but these next few texts seem to take that to another level. How do we honestly reconcile Scriptures that, we will see, seem so contrary to one another?

CQ Team



Tricia asks: How does "not trying to be precise" but being divinely inspired work together?

The Gospels paint a picture of the event without being worried about the exact moment of day. The important takeaway is these faithful women wanted to honor the body of Jesus. What they encountered was not what they expected.

When precise is necessary, the record is precise. When it is not important, it is not precise. It is as simple as that. Let's not focus on the unimportant.



Was the great stone sealing the tomb of Jesus rolled away before or after their arrival?

Matthew - implies the women witnessed the moving of the stone:

Matthew 28:2-5: (NASB) ²And 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. ³And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴The guards shook for **fear** **<5401>** of him and became like dead men. ⁵The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid.

Fear: Strongs #5401 *phobos*; from a primary *phobomai* (to be put in fear); alarm or fright

Mark - the women wondered who would roll the stone away, but when they arrived, it was already moved:

Mark 16:3-4: (NASB) ³They were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? ⁴Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

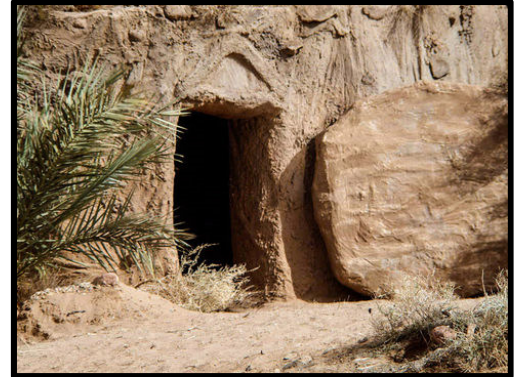
Luke - the women found the stone rolled away:

Luke 24:2: (NASB) *And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.*

John - the women found the stone rolled away:

John 20:1: (NASB) *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.*

The Matthew account provides extra details. In Mark, Luke and John, the women came early in the morning and the stone is already rolled away. Matthew tells us how the stone was rolled away and says the angel was there with the women telling them not to be afraid. It seems contradictory, because it seems like they saw this angel do this work, and it scared them.



Let's say this: Do not read what is not there. Again, let's put the accounts together and fill in the missing details. If you read Matthew 28:2-5 carefully, it does not say the women saw the stone rolled away. It says *the guards* saw it. They were terrified, and it says they *became like dead men*. In my mind, that describes they passed out from fear. They were paralyzed with fear. Later in the Matthew account, it tells us they revived, went into Jerusalem and told the priests what was happening. That all takes time to happen. We have to realize that between verses 4 and 5, some time had passed. After these guards are dealt with, they are terrified, they leave, the stone is rolled away, and THEN the women come and see the tomb has been opened.

This interpretation harmonizes with the other accounts without violating anything in Matthew. Just put five or ten minutes between verses 4 and 5, and any discrepancy is resolved.

The critics make this a big deal, saying because this is written in the present tense, it therefore has to all be happening at the same time.

The guards shook for fear - they were afraid to the point they probably passed out. The very next words in Matthew are, *the angel said to the women do not be afraid*. We should not read into verse 4 to say the women were watching this take place. We should read that this happened to the guards, and then afterwards the angels said to the women, *Do not be afraid*.

Because we have Mark, Luke and John to give us the extra detail that the stone was already rolled away, we can come back to Matthew and say, "Okay, I see where that happened - between verses 4 and 5." Mark, Luke and John help us understand how Matthew could be correct.

For those who want to find the harmony of Scripture and the truth of the matter, look at the different accounts and see the sense of just a few minutes happening between verse 4 and verse 5. Just because verse 5 follows verse 4 does not mean it is the instant next thing. This commonly happens in the gospels.



We conclude the stone had already just been rolled away by an angel who also subdued the guards.

The four accounts together fill in these details we might get wrong if we only had one account. It is multiple eyewitnesses giving us the building blocks to put the whole picture together.



Who was at the tomb when they arrived? One or two men, or one or two angels?

Matthew - one angel:

Matthew 28:2-5,7: (NASB) ²And 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. ³And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴The guards shook for **fear <5401>** of him and became like dead men. ⁵The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁷Go quickly and tell his disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee.... behold, I have told you.

Mark - one young man:

Mark 16:5: (NASB) Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

Luke - two men:

Luke 24:4: (NASB) While they were **perplexed <639>** about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing.

Perplexed: Strong's #639 *aporeo*; to have no way out, i.e. be at a loss (mentally)

John - two angels (Mary's individual experience):

John 20:12: (NASB) 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.

Again, do not read what is not there. Because it says they saw one young man does not mean there weren't two. Luke says there were two, but only one did the talking. It is reasonable to see two people sitting there, but the one talking is the one being described. I think what is happening here is one angel did the talking, but there were two present. We will soon talk about a lovely picture in the John account as to why there were two angels. Why did one look like a young man? An angel can take on any form he wants, so I think that was the form this particular angel took. This is not actually a contradiction.

Many times in the Bible, angels appear as men and are identified as such.

We get the sense of the awe of the moment with the way they were robed *in dazzling clothing*, but they appeared as men in order to communicate. All four of the gospels are trying to show us this was the most amazing event in all of human history. Two angels come to these women in the appearance of men to make it palatable, to make it understandable, so as not to traumatize them.



We conclude there were two angels who took on the likeness of men, both dressed in dazzling white. One did the talking.

**Recalling details from a traumatic event is tricky.
Where were the angels located, and what did they say?**

As we look into this account, it is important to remind ourselves that the people who had these experiences surrounding Jesus' resurrection were just people. They had just lost their Master and friend in a horrible series of experiences. They were ALL battling deep sorrow and grief.



**Where were the angels situated? Inside or outside the tomb?
Were they standing or sitting?**

Matthew - an angel sitting on the stone outside the tomb:

Matthew 28:2: (NASB) *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.*

Mark - a young man sitting inside, on the right:

Mark 16:5: (NASB) *Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were **amazed <1568>**.*

Amazed: Strong's #1568 *ekthambeo*; to astonish utterly

Luke - two men standing inside:

Luke 24:3-4: (NASB) ³*but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.* ⁴*While they were **perplexed <639>** about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing.*

John - (Mary's individual experience) two angels sitting on each end of the stone slab:

John 20:12: (NASB) *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.*

We are given the four accounts in order to take them as a united testimony.

We dealt with the Matthew account and the angel sitting on the stone. We saw the angel was not sitting on the stone when the women came. This was in order to deal with the guards, get rid of them, and get the stone rolled away so the women could go inside. Mark, Luke and John all say the angels were inside the tomb.



So, one angel initially is outside the tomb. When the women come, the angels are now inside the tomb. One was standing and one was sitting. Well, why couldn't he have been doing both? He was initially standing or initially sitting and then changed position. I don't think this is another one that is a big deal.

The John account is significant, though. The book of John was written years after Matthew, Mark and Luke. John had a chance to read and supplement the accounts. He specifically tells us one thing the other accounts do not: one angel was sitting at the head and one was at the feet of where the body of Jesus was lying. He does this, I believe, for a very specific purpose. The other gospel writers were just giving general information, but John gave us this important detail.

Here is a reason why every Christian should study the Old Testament as well as the New. If you study the ancient tabernacle of Israel, this should bring a picture to mind. The Tabernacle building was made up of two rooms, the Holy and the Most Holy. One day a year, called the Day of Atonement, which Jews still celebrate to this day (Yom Kippur), the blood of the bull was brought into the Most Holy, which contained the Ark of the Covenant. This was a wooden box overlaid with gold. On top of it was the mercy seat, a solid piece of gold with two angels formed into it.

For more on the topic of the mercy seat on the Ark, please search our archives for Episode 1088 "Contradictions (Part III): Does God Contradict Himself?"

The two angels are looking down, toward the center of the Ark. When the priests sacrificed the bull on the Day of Atonement, they would bring the blood into the Most Holy and would sprinkle it on the center section of the mercy seat, where the angels were looking.



They sprinkled the blood *on and before* (Leviticus 16:14) the mercy seat. We can see how this could have been in the shape of a cross. This act gave Israel one year of having their sins covered, so they could have a measure of a relationship with God. This was called the *sin offering*. It was a Day of Atonement. If the mercy seat itself represents God's justice where blood would be sprinkled, the two angels could represent God's love and His power.



Both His love and power are “looking down at” the mercy seat, waiting for the blood of atonement to be applied. This is the static picture in the Old Testament.

Now, in your imagination, bring that mercy seat into the tomb where Jesus was. You see the slab and the two angels, but now these angels are different. They are not made out of gold - they are alive. They are not facing in - they are facing out and they are talking. I believe John's picture tells us the satisfaction of sin has been made by the death of Jesus, where his body had laid on that slab. Now the angels of power and love can DO something. They can act, because the blood of atonement has been provided. I think this is intentional. It is a lovely picture we would miss if we did not study the Old Testament along with the book of Hebrews.

Tom will be joining us for an entire episode on the Tabernacle, scheduled for Episode 1098.

The Mark account again:

Mark 16:5: (NASB) *Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.*

Also, notice the announcement of Jesus' resurrection is by the angel sitting on the right. The announcement for the coming of John the Baptist to Zacharias was from the angel inside the Temple on the right side of the altar.

Instead of getting tied up in the details, see how the story jumps out because we have the different gospels.



They appeared inside the tomb, likely standing first, and then sitting where Jesus had lain. The first angel started outside on the rock, but then appeared to the women inside. This is not a contradiction, just the movement and placing of the characters.

ALWAYS SEEK THE LARGER CONTEXT BEYOND ANY SINGLE ACCOUNT.
REMEMBER, VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES ENHANCE TRUE UNDERSTANDING.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



What did the
messengers
say?



What did the messengers say?

Matthew:

Matthew 28:5-7: (NASB) ⁵The angel said to the women, Do not be **afraid <5399>**; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, just as he said. Come, see the place where he was lying. ⁷Go 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.

Afraid: Strong's #5399 *phobeo*; to frighten, i.e. (passively) to be alarmed;
by analogy, to be in awe of, i.e. revere

Mark:

Mark 16:6-7: (NASB) ⁶And he said to them, Do not be **amazed** <1568>; 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. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.

Amazed: Strong's #1568 *ekthambeo*; to astonish utterly

Luke:

Luke 24:5-7: (NASB) ⁵and as the women were **terrified** <1719> and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but he has risen. Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilee, ⁷saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

Terrified: Strong's #5399 *emphobos*; in fear, i.e. alarmed

John (Mary's individual experience):

John 20:13: (NASB) 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.

Matthew, Mark and Luke basically said three things:

1. DO NOT BE AFRAID
2. JESUS IS RISEN
3. GO TELL THE DISCIPLES

Remember, John's account is unique. It tells of a different experience, when Mary came back. Mary heard both messages. She heard because she was with the women initially; so she heard the three things, and later on heard a special message designed especially for her.



Matthew: Do not be **afraid** <5399> - meaning, to be frightened.

Mark: Do not be **amazed** <1568> - meaning, to be utterly astonished.

If both records are quoting the same angel's message, why are different Greek words used?

Here are at least five women telling their account. They probably used different words in each description. All are correct - they were amazed, they were afraid, they were terrified. In fact, the New International Version of Mark 16:8 says, *Trembling and bewildered, they fled from the tomb.* So, here is another description of them. We get a sense of all of the emotions that can be described in different ways. All of these words are pertinent and, again, in taking the accounts together, we realize there is power in the different diversity of words. They do not contradict; they supplement.

The experience of the individuals supplement the big picture. No two people react exactly the same to the same experience. This diversity gives us a sense of how important and dramatic this event was.



Being told not to be afraid did not calm their fears. That came later when Jesus dealt with them, as we will discuss soon. Sometimes an angel appeared and people thought it was human. Other times, and this is one of them, the angel intentionally looked spectacular. He is dazzling, because he wants them to understand this is a miracle. This angel does not look like another man, but specifically looks like a spirit being.



The angel's message was to not be afraid. It acknowledged the shock of not finding Jesus' body and revealed the miraculous news of his resurrection. It also told them they would see Jesus soon.

How do you think you would do in the midst of such trauma, even with the comforting message of the angel?

All the women at the tomb were told that Jesus was raised, yet Mary doesn't seem to get it. Why?

This is one of those points critics love to grab hold of and run with. It proves the events we are talking about did not go smoothly and without issues. In a sense, the critics are correct - this was not a smooth and seamless experience. However, they are wrong about WHAT was happening.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



Did the women
tell anyone?



Did the women tell anyone what happened?



Matthew - they told the disciples:

Matthew 28:8: (NASB) *And they left the tomb quickly with **fear** <5401> (alarm, fright) and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples.*



Mark - they said nothing to anyone:

Mark 16:5,8: (NASB) *⁵Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were **amazed** <1568> (astonish utterly)... ⁸They went out and **fled** <5343> (ran away) from the tomb, for **trembling** <5156> (quaking with fear) and **astonishment** <1611> (displacement of the mind) had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were **afraid** <5399>.*



Luke - they reported to the eleven:

Luke 24:9,22-24: (NASB) *and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest...²²But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and did not find his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but him they did not see.*



John - after Mary's second tomb visit, she announced to the disciples:

John 20:18: (NASB) *Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her.*

The Mark account says they said nothing because they were afraid, yet in the other accounts, they talked.

We read these words as a story on a page. But try to comprehend the emotion they were feeling. Trembling and bewildered, they fled and resolved not to say anything. But some accounts say the reason they were leaving was to tell the apostles. I think both are true. They were so disconcerted by what they were seeing, by what they were told, that they were bewildered. Did they believe it or didn't they? I don't think they believed that Jesus was raised. I believe they knew his body was gone and this dazzling person told them he was resurrected. They are utterly confused and bewildered. So, they might have said, "Let's not say anything to anyone on the way, but let's tell the apostles what happened."

When Mary Magdalene returned, she was looking for his body. She was not looking for a resurrected Lord, so she did not believe he had been resurrected. The accounts are harmonized by realizing they are in a mental state we just cannot comprehend unless we lived through it.



I had an experience about nine years ago. I was driving down my street on my way to my office and saw a little toddler all by himself out in his front yard walking toward the street. As I drove by, I looked and thought, "That's weird." I looked in my mirror and this little toddler who couldn't have been more than 15 months old, was starting to walk in the street. My eyes got wide. I pulled my car over, and I'm literally trembling because I'm so afraid this kid is going to get hit. I tried to get out of my car and couldn't. It occurred to me I didn't unbuckle my seat belt.

I lost my objectivity because I was so afraid for the child. I went running back and someone else had seen the same thing and got there just before I did, picked the kid up and brought him back to his house. But afterwards I couldn't act as clearly as I would have liked, because of the emotion the situation caused. It was beyond my comprehension how this little child was standing in the road. This is a tiny experience. What if we went to anoint the body of Jesus and not only was the tomb opened up, the body's not there, and these dazzling angels are telling us he has been raised from the dead? This is beyond our comprehension!

I think they were shocked! It leads to **Matthew 28:10** - Jesus appeared to these women on the road as they are returning to the apostles. Why did he do that? To calm their fears, to make them understand he had been resurrected, that what the angels had said was not some crazy thing that they were hallucinating but that it was the truth. The account says they fell down and worshipped him. They realized this was Jesus and their fear was gone. It even said they were fearful AND full of joy, which is kind of a crazy, mixed feeling. Now the fear is all gone and there is just pure joy. Then they return to the disciples.



We note that Mary Magdalene could not have been there, because when she came back to the tomb, she did not believe Jesus had been raised. Had she been with those women on the road, she would have had the same experience, but she missed it. We will get to why we think she was not there shortly.

The women told no one but the disciples.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



Did Mary *know*
Jesus was
resurrected?



When Mary Magdalene returned from the tomb, did she know Jesus had been resurrected?



Matthew - yes:

Matthew 28:7-8: (NASB) ⁷Go 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. ⁸And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples.



Mark - yes (after Jesus appeared to her on her second tomb visit):

Mark 16:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰She went and reported to those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.



Luke - yes:

Luke 24:5-9: (NASB) ⁵and as the women were **terrified <1719>** and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, Why do you seek the living one among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but he has risen. Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilee, ⁷saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Luke 24:23: (NASB) and did not find his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.



John - no (after Mary's first tomb visit):

John 20:2: (NASB) 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.

We are focusing on Mary Magdalene specifically. Matthew, Mark and Luke show us she did not know, because John tells us when she came back, she did not know. She must not have been there in the Matthew, Mark and Luke accounts when Jesus appeared to them on the road to Emmaus.

We know she came back with Peter and John, so she likely went separately to look for them. This is speculation, but she probably went to a different location than the other women. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to the house of the high priest, Peter and John followed him. The other disciples ran away. We do not know where they went, but



possibly to Bethany, where Mary and Martha lived, a few miles outside of Jerusalem.

If the women went to different locations to find the various apostles, it would explain why Mary, Peter and John came first. Perhaps she was not with the other women on the road, because she knew Peter and John were not with the other men. This explains why she did not understand Jesus had been raised when she returned.



Days before, the apostles went to different locations, and were most likely in different locations during this scary time. Mary knew where Peter and John were, and she went to find them. The other women went to tell other disciples. Mary was told about the resurrection after the other women, but it was beyond their ability to comprehend it at that time.



Mary was given the news of his resurrection but was not initially able to comprehend it.

Jesus appeared to Mary specifically. He had appeared to the rest of the women on the road, as they all needed to be assured the resurrection was true.

Mary was special to Jesus. We see another example when Peter denied Jesus. Jesus makes a specific appearance after his resurrection just to restore Peter's focus. He saw Peter was troubled with his guilty conscience, and Jesus went out of his way to restore him. Had he not done that, Peter would not be an apostle.

Jesus had saved Mary's life when he rescued her from demon possession. Honoring him after he was dead so overrode the power of that miracle that Jesus very calmly and graciously came to her. We are always assured to be given what we need so our faith can be complete.

I don't think any of us can appreciate what it means to be demon-possessed, especially by seven demons. Her experience and the change in her life Jesus accomplished planted in her heart such a depth of appreciation and love for him that she would do anything for him. I think she was the leader of this whole entourage of women, and it was likely her idea to come early in the morning and why she is mentioned first in the record.

It is amazing to see the depth of Jesus' caring for Mary in the midst of the world's greatest miracle.

With all these powerful and life changing events unfolding, what details are left to be put in order?

Now that we have navigated through many of the challenges to the integrity of this wonderful biblical account, we can begin to wrap it up with the last few details. It is important to always remember the fundamentals of reporting from various perspectives - people see and recall differently. We benefit from multiple, individual personal experiences.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



When
did Mary first
see Jesus?



When did Mary first see Jesus?

Matthew - before she returned to the disciples:

Matthew 28:8-9: (NASB) ⁸And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

Mark - before she returned to the disciples:

Mark 16:9-10: (NASB) ⁹Now after he had risen early on the first day of the week, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went and reported to those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping.

John - after she returned to Peter and John:

John 20:2: (NASB) 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 20:14: (NASB) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.



We have to understand where we get our Bible from. We do not have original New Testament writings. We have copies called "manuscripts." The oldest manuscripts found so far date to the third century, meaning a few hundred years after they were originally written. There were no printing presses, so these had to be hand copied, letter by letter, page by page. It was a difficult job. All of the original manuscripts have been lost.

The miracle is we have enough evidence to preserve the original writings back to the third century. The oldest manuscript we have is called the Codex Sinaiticus. It was found in the Sinai Desert at Saint Catherine's Monastery. *The Sinaitic manuscript does not contain Mark 16:9 to the end of the chapter*. It is simply not in the oldest manuscript. Biblical experts say it was added later. They think a copyist who read the other accounts assumed that Mary Magdalene was the first

one to see him so they added that and other things he thought were right. But we can cross that out of our Bibles, because it was not in the original writings.

Based on our reasoning, Mary Magdalene was not the first to see him. At least four other women on the road were first. According to the John account, there were at least four women plus Mary Magdalene. She would have seen Jesus on her second visit to the tomb when he appeared to her.



<http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/> "Codex Sinaiticus is one of the most important books in the world. Handwritten well over 1600 years ago, the manuscript contains the Christian Bible in Greek, including the oldest complete copy of the New Testament. Its heavily corrected text is of outstanding importance for the history of the Bible and the manuscript - the oldest substantial book to survive Antiquity - is of supreme importance for the history of the book."

This website gives the English translation of the oldest manuscript of the Bible in existence today.



Part of understanding Bible "contradictions" is understanding there were errors in copying. The Mark account was added later. Mary first saw Jesus after she came back to the tomb with Peter and John. She did not see him before that because she was not in the group with the other women on the road to find the other disciples.

If she was, she would have already known he was resurrected. But from the John account, she clearly did not.



Mary saw Jesus after she came back to the tomb with Peter and John.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



Could Jesus
be *touched*
after the resurrection?



Could Jesus be touched after the resurrection?

Matthew - yes:



Matthew 28:8-10: (NASB) ⁸And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then 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.



John - no:

John 20:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶Jesus said to her, Mary! She turned and said to him in Hebrew, Rabboni (which means, Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, Stop clinging to me, (King James Version says, "Touch me not") 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.



John - yes:

John 20:26-27: (NASB) ²⁶After 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. ²⁷Then 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.

Clearly, Jesus could be touched after his resurrection. In fact, Mary clings to him in the John account. She is holding onto him, so it was allowable. But what he is saying is, "I have given you a job. This is important. Go do it. Do



not spend time here. There are a lot of things that have to be done, and this is your mission. Go run. Go do it."

He is not saying, "You cannot physically touch me; it is against the rules." He is saying, "There is no time for this. You have something bigger to do. Others need to know what you just found out."

Understanding Mary's attachment to Jesus, she would have sat there for hours had she been allowed to, because of this traumatic infusion of blessing that her dead Lord was alive and he is standing right there.



Jesus certainly could be touched and embraced, but he would not be delayed in accomplishing all the Father had for him to do in those next 40 days.



Observations after putting the four accounts together - they are complimentary and not contradictory:

- An angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone. There is a great earthquake.
- The Roman guards are terrified, they faint then get up and run to tell the chief priests what they had witnessed (Matthew 28:11).
- At least five women, including Mary Magdalene, came to Jesus' tomb to anoint his dead body.
- When they arrive, the stone had been rolled away.
- They enter the open tomb, and an angel invites them to see the place where Jesus had laid.
- The women are terrified and they were shocked by what they saw. Afraid and bewildered, they flee, determined not to say anything to anyone.
- They separate. Mary Magdalene runs to tell Peter and John (probably somewhere near Jerusalem) someone has taken the body of Jesus. The other women seek out the remaining apostles, possibly in Bethany.
- On their way, Jesus meets the four women, and they fall and worship him, now believing he is alive.
- Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb with Peter and John, still not comprehending Jesus' resurrection.
- Mary Magdalene encounters Jesus, who is disguised as a gardener. He says her name in some tender way that only she could grasp and understands this is the resurrected Jesus. He made a special appearance just for her.



We have taken the pieces of this account and put them together into a harmonious, inspirational story that gives us the greatest hope mankind has ever received. When critics say the gospels contradict each other, we need to carefully review them to see how it all fits together.

One of the things that impressed me was the care from the women. The apostles did not think of bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus, but the women did. The women were so devoted to Jesus that he made a special effort to have them be the first witnesses of his resurrection. This tells me that anyone who serves Jesus, no matter how lowly they think their service is, is recognized and consequently blessed. None of us should ever think when we do something for our Lord, no matter how little it is, that he does not see it and appreciate it.

These women were specially blessed by Jesus, who spent time appearing to them and comforting them. He gave them this awesome memory and privilege they could share with their families and treasure for the rest of their lives.

Let's decide to look at the Scriptures in the way they were written, to hear the story they are here to tell us. It is all about the salvation of humankind through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The accounts of his resurrection are utterly inspiring and draw us to a sense of awe that God is God, and His son gave his life so we can have life.

*Why so many contradictions surrounding Jesus' resurrection?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on September 9, 2019:
Ep. #1090: Contradictions (Part V):
What Profound Secret Does Creation Reveal?