

THE RESURRECTION ACCOUNTS OF JESUS COMPARED-1

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The biography of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, has been preserved for humanity in the four Gospel accounts of the New Testament. Since the time of the New Testament church's establishment, skeptics have endeavored to destroy Christianity, its Founder, and its members by casting doubt on the events that surrounded the life of Christ. One of the favorite techniques of those skeptics has been to point out "contradictions" throughout the New Testament, concerning every facet of the religion and its history. One such effort has focused on the account of Jesus' resurrection and the actions of those involved.

For a person to properly understand if a person or a piece of literature contains a contradiction, one must first understand what a true contradiction is. "In its briefest form, the Law of Contradiction, as stated in W. Stanley Jevons' *Elementary Lessons in Logic*, says: Nothing can both be and not be." The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle amplified this definition by suggesting that there are three areas to which this maxim applied. He stated: "That the same thing should at the same time both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible." According to Aristotle, in order for a contradiction to be true, it must be referencing the same person, place, or thing at the same time and in the same context. With that in mind, this effort will spotlight those supposed contradictions, put forth to cast the shadow of doubt on the fact that Christ lived, died, and walked from a tomb, so He could bring life to the dead.

One of the first points of attack is focused on the women who went to the tomb on the Sunday of Christ's resurrection. How many women ventured to the tomb, and what time did they go? The question is, "Do the four accounts contradict one another, therefore proving the Christian religion to be a sham? It is true that all four accounts do differ in some ways, but that does not indicate a contradiction. One must keep in mind that when eyewitnesses, or inspired writers in this case, describe what they witnessed it will almost always differ in some ways. Just as witnesses to an automobile accident may not relay the identical information, that is not proof that one or the other is wrong. One witness may see the accident from one angle while the other witnesses the same accident from an entirely different viewpoint. One may add or leave out a portion of detail that they did not see or felt unimportant, but it is not a contradiction. In similar fashion, the Gospel writers added additional information or left out what they felt was not necessary to the account.

Matthew reported that two women, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary went to the tomb (Mt. 28:1). Mark relates to the reader that three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome made the journey to visit the tomb of Jesus (Mk. 16:1). When the same account is read in Luke's Gospel, he makes no mention of any women by name, but simply says "they came unto the sepulcher" (Lk. 24:1), of course, the reader is able to understand that the "they" of his account is a reference to the women of the previous chapter, but no names are given. When the apostle John described what he had witnessed, he only mentioned one woman, Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:1)

Did these inspired writers get their stories wrong? Perhaps, as they compared notes on the happening they were not diligent in remembering what really took place, or maybe as they conspired to lie to the world, they could not keep their lies straight! In reality, we refer to the witnesses to an automobile accident, and it becomes clear that each writer added or left out what they felt was important or

unimportant to the account. All four writers agree on the day of week in which the encounter took place, Sunday; either stated as the first day of the week, or that the Sabbath had passed. John mentioned only one woman but the plural of verse two suggests that she was not by herself in the mission of anointing the Lord's body. Mark names the women that were with her at the crucifixion, and Luke simply stated "they" a plurality of people, making reference to the women that prepared the spices for the body (Lk. 23:55-56), but later names four women, the three mentioned and the additional Joanna (Lk. 24:10). The reasonable deduction is that a plurality of women visited the Lord's tomb that morning, and when the accounts are combined it is clear that at least four women were present. It makes sense that if there were four, there could be three, two, or even just one present at any given time.

However hard one may try, the Gospel accounts have never been shown to be untrue. Next week's article will address the supposed contradictions of Jesus' resurrection surrounding the angels that were present.