

A Harmony of the Resurrection Narratives

Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-18

Alleged Contradiction #1:

'The Gospels Disagree on Who Went to the Tomb'

- **Matthew:** "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" (28:1)
- **Mark:** "Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome" (16:1)
- **Luke:** "Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women" (24:10)
- **John:** "Mary Magdalene" (20:1)

Alleged Contradiction #1:

‘The Gospels Disagree on Who Went to the Tomb’

False Assumption: Because only one or two women are mentioned by name by each Gospel writer, the other women could not have been present.

Solution: There were at least five women that set out together to go to the tomb: Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and at least one other woman who is not named in any of the Gospel narratives.

Alleged Contradiction #2: 'The Gospels Disagree on the Time of Day'

- **Matthew:** "toward the dawn of the first day of the week" (28:1)
- **Mark:** "very early on the first day of the week... when the sun had risen" (16:2)
- **Luke:** "the first day of the week at early dawn" (24:1)
- **John:** "the first day of the week.... while it was still dark" (20:1)

Alleged Contradiction #2: 'The Gospels Disagree on the Time of Day'

False Assumption: It cannot be both dark and light at the same time so the Gospel narratives are in conflict.

Solution: When the women set out for the tomb it was still dark, but by the time they arrived the sun had started to rise. It took time for them to walk to the tomb.

Alleged Contradiction #3:

‘The Gospels Disagree on Whether or not the Women Witnessed the Stone being Rolled Away’

- **Matthew:** “And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it” (28:2)
- **Mark:** “And they were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?’ And looking up they say that the stone was rolled back – for it was very large” (16:3-4)
- **Luke:** “And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb” (24:2)
- **John:** “and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb” (20:1)

Alleged Contradiction #3:

'The Gospels Disagree on Whether or not the Women Witnessed the Stone being Rolled Away'

False Assumption: Matthew's Gospel indicates that the women were there at the tomb when the stone was rolled away, while the other Gospels indicate that the stone was rolled away before they arrived.

Solution: The stone was in fact rolled away before the women arrived. Matthew is giving that information as a 'flashback' so the reader understands how the stone was rolled away and what happened to the Roman guards.

Alleged Contradiction #4: 'The Gospels Disagree on Important Details Regarding the Angels'

- **Matthew:** describes one angel sitting on the stone who speaks to the women" (28:2-5)
- **Mark:** "and entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed" (16:5)
- **Luke:** "behold two men stood by them in dazzling apparel" (24:4)
- **John:** "she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain" (20:12)

Alleged Contradiction #4: 'The Gospels Disagree on Important Details Regarding the Angels'

False Assumption: Since some Gospels speak about only one angel there could not have been two. Because the angels are described as either standing or sitting, there is a contradiction.

Solution: Just because some Gospels focus on one angel (the one speaking), does not mean that a second angel was not also present. The angels could have easily moved around or changed position as they interacted with the women.

Alleged Contradiction #5:

'The Gospels Disagree on what the Angel Said'

- **Matthew:** "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen as he said..... go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead" (28:5-7)
- **Mark:** "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here... but go tell his disciples and Peter" (16:6-7)
- **Luke:** "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (24:5)
- **John:** "Woman, why are you weeping?" (20:13)

Alleged Contradiction #5:

‘The Gospels Disagree on what the Angel Said’

False Assumption: What the angel says to the woman in John’s Gospel is totally different than what the angels say to the women in the other Gospels. It must be based on a contradictory tradition

Solution: As we will soon see, Mary Magdalene’s interaction with the angel took place later on in the morning. John records a different conversation that took place at a different time. The women were not all together as a group for the entire time that morning.

Alleged Contradiction #6:

'The Gospels Disagree on who the Women Met First, the Angels or the Disciples'

- **Matthew:** The women speak to the angels before they speak to the disciples
- **Mark:** The women speak to the angels but there is no record of them speaking to the disciples. It says that they were trembling and speechless
- **Luke:** The women speak to the angels before they speak to the disciples
- **John:** The woman (Mary Magdalene) speaks to the disciples (Peter and John) before she speaks with the angels.

Alleged Contradiction #6:

‘The Gospels Disagree on who the Women Met First, the Angels or the Disciples’

False Assumption: John’s Gospel has the order of meetings reversed. It also indicates that Peter and John entered the tomb before Mary spoke to the angel, which cannot be reconciled with the other Gospel narratives in which the disciples find out about the empty tomb after the women report back to them.

Solution: This is the most confusing part of the resurrection narrative, but can be resolved once we understand that neither the women nor the disciples were all together throughout the morning. The women set off together to the tomb, but when Mary saw that it was empty she ran off by herself. Peter and John were also separated from the other disciples. Mary’s encounter with the angel happened after the other women left the tomb.

Alleged Contradiction #7:

'The Gospels Disagree on when Jesus appeared to the Women'

- **Matthew:** Jesus meets the women on their way to tell the disciples what the angels had said (28:9)
- **Mark:** Jesus met first with Mary Magdalene (16:9) - *(This detail is written in the longer ending of Mark's Gospel and is not in the oldest manuscripts)*
- **Luke:** Luke has no record of Jesus appearing to the women.
- **John:** Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene at the tomb, after Peter and John had entered the Tomb and found it empty. The other women do not appear to be present. (20:14-18)

Alleged Contradiction #7:

'The Gospels Disagree on when Jesus appeared to the Women'

False Assumption: The tradition in the Synoptics has Jesus meeting with the women after they left the tomb, while the tradition in John has the Lord appearing to Mary at the tomb. These are two conflicting traditions.

Solution: Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene at the Tomb, and later appeared to the rest of the women who were still on their way back to find the disciples. There is no contradiction if we understand that Mary Magdalene was not with the other women for the entire morning.

Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #1:** Sometime before dawn there was a supernatural earthquake during which time the stone was rolled away, and the Roman Guards were knocked unconscious. One of the two angels was sitting on the stone waiting for the women to arrive.



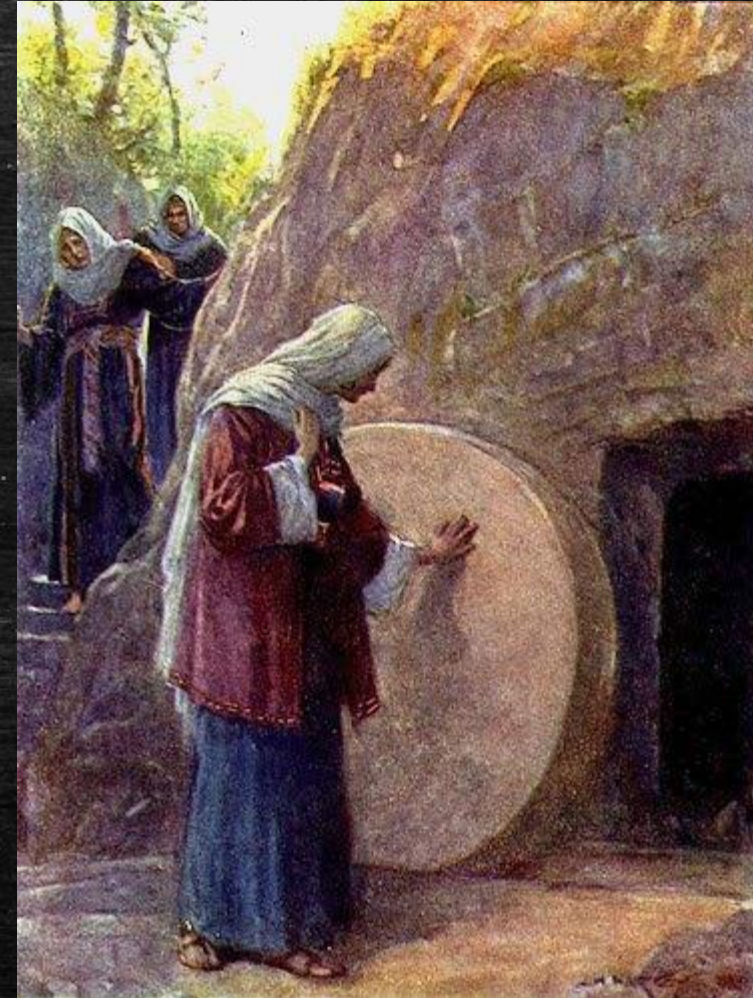
Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #2:** At least five women including Mary Magdalene set off together while it was still dark to anoint Jesus' body with spices. While they walk in darkness they discuss how they will get into the tomb due to the heavy stone blocking the entrance. They arrive at early dawn to find the stone already rolled away. The angels are not visible initially as they have moved inside of the empty tomb.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #3:** Seeing that the stone was rolled away, and the guards are unconscious, Mary Magdalene assumes the worst – the body of Jesus has been stolen!. Distraught and leaving the other women at the tomb, she runs off by herself to find the disciples. The other women remain at the tomb after Mary has left.



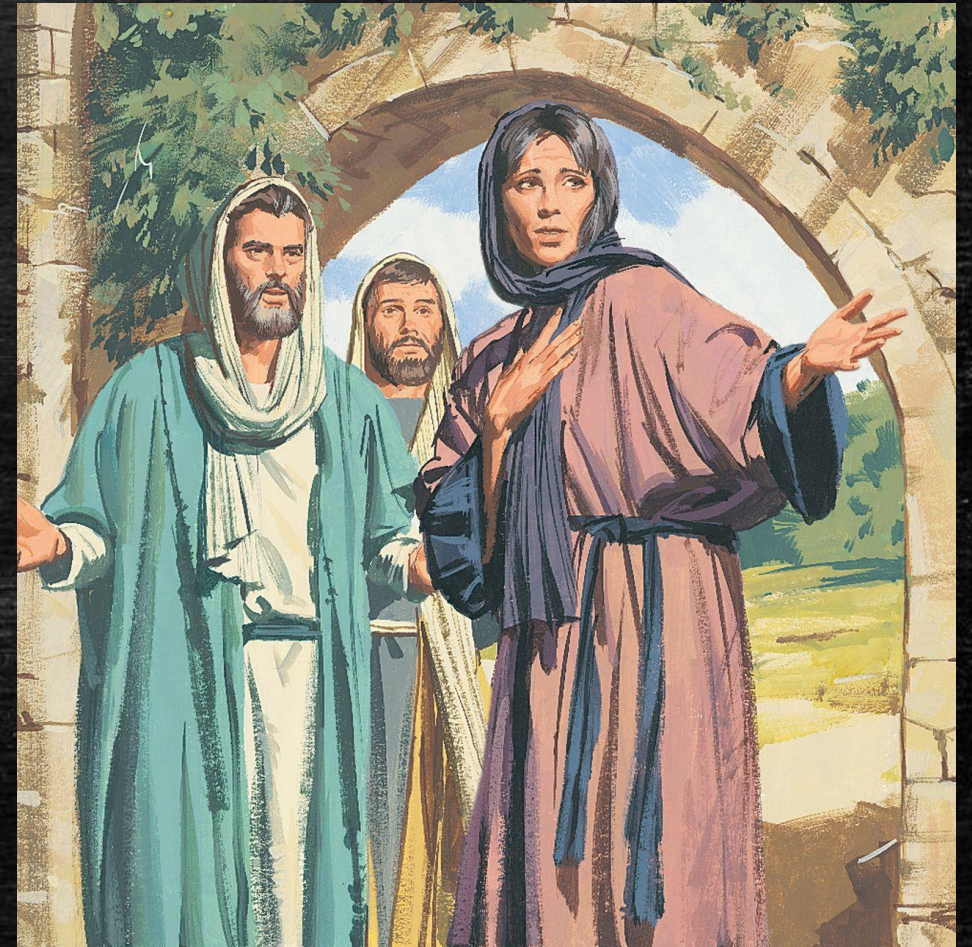
Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #4:** While Mary Magdalene runs off to find the disciples, the other women enter the empty tomb and encounter the angels. They tell the women the good news that Jesus has risen from the dead and tell them to go tell the other disciples. The women leave the tomb trembling and speechless and head off in search of the disciples.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #5:** On her way to find the disciples, Mary Magdalene meets Peter and John. It is possible that they were also heading toward the tomb. She tells them that the body of Christ had been stolen. Peter and John run the rest of the way to the tomb and John gets there first. When the two disciples arrive, the angel is not there in the tomb.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #6:** Upon entering the tomb Peter and John see the graveclothes of Jesus with the linen face-cloth carefully folded up. This was enough to convince John that it was not the scene of a robbery. Peter and John have no interaction with the angels and leave the tomb, likely to find the rest of the disciples.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #7:** After Peter and John have run off to the tomb, Mary slowly walks back to the tomb. Still believing that the body has been stolen, she is distraught and weeping. By the time she arrives at the tomb, Peter and John have already left. This time she looks into the tomb and sees the angels who ask her why she is weeping.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #8:** Still convinced that the body was stolen Mary turns around, and throughout her tears sees a man who she assumes is the gardener. The man calls her by name and she realizes that she's speaking with the risen Jesus! Overjoyed, Mary runs off to find the disciples and tell them the good news.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #9:** As Mary is heading back, the other women are still walking on their way to find the disciples. They are trembling and speechless. The risen Jesus who had just appeared to Mary at the tomb, now appears to the rest of the women as they walk on the road.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #10:** Mary Magdalene and the other women who have had different interactions with the risen Jesus eventually find the rest of the disciples and tell them that Jesus has risen from the dead. Not all of them believe their story immediately.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #11:** Later in the morning the Roman guards regain their senses and report to the chief priests. The Sanhedrin decides to bribe the soldiers to tell a lie: 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' This lie was widely spread among the Jews who did not believe.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #12:** Later that day Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Later that evening Jesus appears to the other disciples who are gathered together in Jerusalem. We are told in Luke's Gospel that Jesus had already appeared to Peter sometime earlier in the day.



Conclusions: A Timeline of Resurrection Morning based on all four Gospels

- **Event #13:** In 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 Paul testifies to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus which occurred over the next 40 days: *"he appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles."*



The Tomb is Still Empty!! He is Risen!

