

RESURRECTION OF JESUS PUZZLE

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1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Reconstruction of New Testament Resurrection Accounts	1
3.	Alleged Contradictions & Rebuttals.....	10
4.	Conclusion.....	13
5.	References	13

1. INTRODUCTION

When several different witnesses testify of what they observed at the same complex event, seldom do they all report the exact same thing; however, if they are all reliable, their accounts should be able to be pieced together to form one single consistent story. If they all reported in a court room the exact same thing and they were all friendly to one side, there would be reason to suspect they had met and decided to fabricate their accounts so they could frame the accused. On the other hand, if their accounts contradicted each other there would also be reason to consider their testimonies unreliable. Real testimonies usually fall some place in between accounts that report the exact same information and accounts which are impossible to make consistent. Since the 5 different testimonies of the New Testament report the resurrection of Jesus was a complex event, it is of interest to compare their accounts to determine their reliability.

An objective reconstruction of a historical event considers the ability of different hypotheses to explain all relevant data concerning that event (1). Thus, this article presents a full evaluation of the data concerning the resurrection of Jesus. A proposed reconstruction of the resurrection of Jesus is given in this article. The best rebuttals to this proposal, in the form of alleged contradictions, are dealt with in this article which is the critical test of the success of the proposed reconstruction.

2. RECONSTRUCTION OF NEW TESTAMENT RESURRECTION ACCOUNTS

Many historians view the historical reliability of the New Testament (NT) documents with great skepticism; however, even critical scholars agree (2) that embarrassing reports in the NT are most likely true. The NT reports that the leading Christian theologian, Paul, originally led the persecution of Christians. This is such an embarrassing story; therefore, most likely would not have been made up. Thus, even critical scholars agree that some sort of transformation of Paul did occur. In I Cor. 15, (critical scholars agree the Paul wrote this book around 56AD) Paul reports who Jesus appeared to: Peter, then the apostles, then to 500, then to James, and finally to him. According to Acts, Jesus's appearance to Paul was several years later after Jesus's bodily resurrection and to Paul came in the form of a bright light and a voice.

Critics claim that when Paul wrote this passage, he was actually thinking of visions or hallucinations that all these folks had. Also, many critics claim that originally the Apostles and Paul just believed in a spiritual rather than a bodily resurrection. In the second half of I Cor. 15 where Paul is discussing the nature of the resurrection, Paul mentions that "flesh & blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Ref. 13 claims that this shows that Paul did not think that there was a bodily resurrection of Jesus. In this portion of I Cor. 15 Paul is contrasting the perishable (15:42) or natural (15:44) man on earth (15:47) to the imperishable (15:42), spiritual (15:44) man in heaven (15:47).

Paul's use of the term "flesh & blood" does not necessarily mean the physical body. For example, Paul's uses this same term in Gal. 1:16 where he obviously did not mean it to be just the physical body. In this passage Paul is not saying he consulted with the physical body, rather with the intellect of some people on Earth. In I Cor. 2:15 Paul had just identified spiritual as physical men with a certain orientation or attitude; thus, Paul's use of "spiritual" does not necessarily mean no physical body. Therefore, Paul's usage of the terms "flesh & blood" and "spiritual" in I Cor. 15 do not necessarily mean physical bodies never resurrect. He could have meant by I Cor. 15:50 that the earthly or natural sinful man will not inherit the kingdom of God which makes sense and is consistent with the rest of the passage. In addition, Acts 13:47 implies that Paul believed that Jesus had bodily resurrected.

Paul reported in Galatians 1:18 that he met with Peter, so Paul would certainly have been informed of what Peter actually thought he saw. According to data about the author of the Gospel of Mark, (Mark is considered the first gospel written) Mark used information from Peter to write his Gospel (7). This Gospel reports that there was an empty tomb which implies a bodily resurrection. According to the Gospels, Peter saw the resurrected Jesus, talked and ate with him over a period of 40 days. This is difficult to explain as a hallucination. For example, the empty tomb could be and was checked at least several times by people who according to the gospels were skeptical. Thus, this hallucination would have kept repeating itself; which is not typical of visions or hallucinations. Visions or hallucinations are most always reported to supposedly occur once and vanish before they can be checked implying it was just in their head or fabricated. The empty tomb concept could have been repeatedly checked and would have been by critics such as those who crucified Jesus. Some critical scholars accept that there must have been an empty tomb because the apostles resurrection story would have been immediately dismissed if Jesus's body was still in the tomb, so critics have concocted up a wide variety of explanations for an empty tomb. Some critic's claim the empty tomb concept was a legend fabricated later (chapter 6, Ref. 14); however, it is included in the Gospel of Mark which is considered the

earliest or most primitive of the four Gospels. In addition, in I Cor. 15 Paul mentions Jesus appeared on the 3rd day which directly relates to the empty tomb which according to the Gospel was discovered on the 3rd day.

Naturally, the critics propose that the resurrection accounts are the result of legends that developed in the early Christian church. However, as shown in Ref. 3 & Ref. 8 there are quite a few features that do not fit with the way legends typical develop. For example, women are the first to discover the empty tomb. Women were considered at that time to be unreliable, so if the story was fabricated, it is unlikely that women would be selected for such a significant role. Further rebuttals to these points can be found in Ref. 10, 11, 13, & 14. These critics dismiss these points by showing examples where these features have developed in other accounts that Christian apologist agree are legendary. Chapter 6 of Ref. 14 does this by giving examples where part of an accepted legend matches with one or part of some feature in the resurrection accounts. By explaining each of these features one by one, Ref. 14 attempts to show that it is not improbable that the resurrection accounts developed as legends. One can always make a converging argument seem weaker by breaking it down into it's individual components that are more probable then the whole argument. This approach is not necessarily successful unless it can be shown that the combination of all the low probabilities is still plausible. Ref. 14 has to bring up quite a few different examples of accepted legends to show that these feature can be developed as legends. In addition, Ref. 14 does not explain all of those features listed in Ref. 8; thus, Ref. 14 does not appear successful in dismissing these features. The critics have not yet presented accepted legends that have so many features as the resurrection that does not fit with the way legends typical develop. This makes for a converging argument for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Thus, more extraordinary evidence for an extraordinary claim.

One of the main complaints of the critics is that the different resurrection accounts in the NT are contradictory; thus, should be considered as unreliable. There are essentially 5 different testimonies of the resurrection recorded in the NT. In the last chapters of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) in the book of Acts (which is a second volume put together by Luke) and in I Corinthians written by Paul. In order to fairly asses if these accounts are contradictory they should be compared to determine if they make a consistent story.

In Section 2.2, the 5 different account are placed side by side each in a continuous sequence as they are recorded in the NT. Gaps are placed where an accounts does not provide any information concerning the event discussed. Thus, the reader can see for themselves how well the different accounts correlate. The data presented in such a raw and complete format provides the reader with the best opportunity to evaluate and critic the assertions made in this article. The five different columns respectively correspond to the following NT accounts; Matthew, Mark, Luke & Acts, John and I Corinthians. Luke & Acts are put together because they are written by the same author. Acts is differentiated from Luke by an "A".

In order to help the reader understand these account, Table 1 shows a summary of the events which are the focus of the different accounts.

The two most ancient and reliable manuscripts of Mark do not contain verses 16:9-20; thus, many conservative and critical scholars consider that Mark originally ended at verse eight or perhaps the original ending was lost because v. 8 is such an abrupt ending. However, Mark 16:9-20 is included in this study even though it was most likely not part of the original Gospel.

Table 1 Summary of Resurrection Events

Event	Matthew 28	Mark 16	Luke 24 & Acts 1	John 20&21	I Cor. 15
Women travel to the tomb	1-4	1-3	1	1a	
Women see tomb and angels	5-7	4-5	2-7	1b	
Women leave and inform disciples	8	8	9-11	2	
Peter & John run to the tomb	*	*	<u>12,34</u>	3-10	
Jesus appears to Mary and she informs others	*	9-11	*	11-18	
Jesus appears to the women	9-10	*	*	*	
Guard talk to Priest	11-15	*	*	*	
Jesus appears to Peter	*	*	<u>*,34</u>	*	5a
Jesus appears to 2 disciples on road to Emmaus	*	12-13	13-35	*	*
Jesus's 1st appearance to group of Apostles (end of Sunday)	<u>*,16b</u>	14	36-48	19-23	5b
Jesus's 2nd appearance to group of Apostles (8 days later)	*	*	*	24-29	*
Jesus appears in Galilee to group of Apostles	<u>16a,7,10</u>	<u>*,7</u>	*	30-25	*
Jesus appear to 500 on a mountain top in Galilee	16b-17	*	*		6
Jesus appears to James	*	*	*		7a
Ascension on Mount Olivet right next to Bethany (40 days later)	18-20	15-16	49-52 A4-A12		*
Jesus appears to Paul (3 years later)					7b-8

- Omitted events, Underline show events implied.

2.1 Proposed Resurrection Reconstruction

A consistent reconstruction related to these five different accounts is listed in this section which is the Hinrichs variation of that proposed in Ref. 4. Ref. 5 also presents a reconstruction of the resurrection accounts and varied in three ways that I think fits even better than the Ref. 4 approach. Ref. 5 has the guard leaving the tomb before the women arrive and has Jesus appearing to the women on the road to Bethany as they were going to inform the other apostles in Bethany of the latest developments. In addition, Ref. 5 has Mary Magdalene before the angels appear, rushing back to inform Peter the body was stolen while the other women stayed at the tomb. Ref. 5 is a much more involved discussion of the Resurrection. It includes harmonizing the words of Jesus at each of the different appearances, where Ref. 4 does not.

2.1.1 The Setting

Jesus had died from the crucifixion and was buried in the tomb of Joseph or Arimathea just outside of Jerusalem. Most of the disciples out of fear left town and were staying in Bethany which is just outside of Jerusalem. Peter and John had stayed in Jerusalem along with the women who had not finished their job of placing spices on the body of Jesus. They had planned on completing this task Sunday morning.

2.1.2 Women travel to the tomb (early Sunday morning)

At least three women were involved (Mark 16: 1): Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife (or mother) of James, and Salome (Luke does not give their names; Matthew refers only to the two Marys); and they had bought the additional spices with their own means (Mark 16:1). They apparently started their journey from the house in Jerusalem while it was still dark (*skotias eti ouses*) even though it was already early morning (*proi*) (John 20:1). But by the time they arrived, dawn was glimmering in the east (*teepiphoskouse*) that Sunday morning (*eismian sabbaton*) (Matt. 28: 1). (Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1 all use the dative: *te mia ton sabbaton*.) Mark 16:2 adds that the tip of the sun had actually appeared above the horizon (*anateilatlos tou heliou-aorist* participle: the nez-codex uses the present participle, *analellontos*, implying "while the sun was rising").

Most likely while they were on their way to the tomb outside the city wall when the earthquake took place, by means of which the angel of the Lord rolled away the great circular stone that had sealed the entrance of the tomb. So blinding was his glorious appearance that the guards specially assigned to the tomb were terrified (Matt. 28:2-4).

2.1.3 Women see tomb and angels

The women were surprised to find their problem of access to the tomb solved; the stone had already been rolled away (Mark 16:34). They then looked into the tomb and discovered the body was gone. Naturally, they thought that somebody had stolen the body and would want to immediately inform the disciples. Immediately they decided to send Mary Magdalene back to tell the disciples that were presently in Jerusalem, Peter & John, that the body was taken. Mary Magdalene left to inform Peter & John. According to Luke 24:4 there was a short period of time while they were

in the tomb before the angels appeared. The authors of the other accounts did not mention this, rather just omitted because they felt it was not necessary to include it to communicate the point which they wanted to express. After Mary Magdalene left an angel appearing as a young man with blazing white garments (Mark 16:5), appeared to them (Luke 24:2-3). But then it became apparent that this angel had a companion, for there were two of them in the tomb. The leading angel spoke words of encouragement, "Don't be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified" (Matt. 28:5). Nevertheless, they were quite terrified at the splendor of these heavenly visitors and by the amazing disappearance of the body they had expected to find in the tomb.

The angel went on: "Why do you seek the living among [lit., 'with' with the genitive] those who are dead? He is not here, but He has risen [Luke 24:5-6], just as He said [Matt. 28:6]. Look at the place where they laid Him [Mark 16:6 & Matt. 28:6]. Remember how He told you when He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man had to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, crucified, and rise again on the third day" (Luke 24:6-7). Then the angel concluded with this command: "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead!" Then he added: "Behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Lo, I have told you" (Matt. 28:7).

2.1.4 Women leave and inform disciples

Upon receiving this news, the women besides Mary Magdalene set out in haste to rejoin the group of sorrowing believers back in the city (possibly in the home of John Mark) and pass on to them the exciting news. They did not pause to say anything for the moment as they hurried back (Mark 16:8) partly because they were fearful and shaken by their encounter at the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene was the first one to meet Peter & John. She still thought the body was taken and said, "They have taken the Lord away from the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid Him!" (John 20:2). She told Peter & John to hurry back to the tomb which they did. Mary followed close behind. Peter & John met the other women along the way who reported much better news that they had seen an angel who said Jesus was alive (Matt. 28:8). Peter & John were not sure what to make of it and continued on to the tomb. Mary may have heard the good news too, but she was still thinking that the body was taken.

2.1.5 Peter and John at the Tomb

John arrived at the tomb first, yet it turned out that he was not as perceptive as Peter, for all John did when he got to the entrance was to stoop down and look into the tomb, where he saw the shroud, or winding sheet, of Jesus lying on the floor (v.5). But Peter was a bit bolder and more curious; he went inside the chamber and found it indeed empty. Then he looked intently at the winding sheet, because it was lying in a very unusual position. Instead of being spread out in a long, jumbled strip, it was still all wrapped together in one spot (*emtetyligmenon eis hena topon*). Moreover, the *soudarion* ("long kerchief") that had been wound around the head of Jesus was not unwound and tossed on the shroud but was still wrapped together and lying right above it (v.6-7). In other words, no one had removed the grave clothes from the corpse in the usual way; it was as if the body had simply passed right out of the headcloth and shroud and left them empty! This was such a remarkable feature that Peter called John back and pointed it out to him. All of a sudden it dawned on the younger man that no one had removed the body from that tomb. The body had simply left the tomb and left the grave clothes on its own power, passing through all those layers of cloth without unwrapping them at all! Then John was convinced: Jesus had not been removed by other hands; He had raised Himself from the dead. That could only mean He was alive again. John and Peter decided to hurry back and report to the others this astounding evidence that Jesus had indeed conquered death and was alive once more.

Now that the group back inside Jerusalem thought that Jesus may be alive they decided the some of the women would head out to inform the rest of the disciples in Bethany and Emmaus that Jesus was alive and they should come back to Jerusalem.

2.1.6 Jesus appears to Mary and she informs others

Peter and John did not tell Mary Magdalene about what they had deduced before they left. Perhaps they did not even realize that she had followed along behind them at her slower pace. In fact, she may not have gotten back to the tomb until they had already left. She arrived all alone, but she did not immediately reenter until she had paused to weep for a little while (John 20:11). To her astonishment it was ablaze with light; and there she beheld two angels in splendid white robes, sitting at each end of the place where Jesus had lain (v.12). Immediately the very same pair that had spoken to the three women at their earlier visit asked her, "Why are you crying?" Had she not understood the glorious news they had told her the first time? But all Mary could think about was the disappearance of Christ's body. "They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have laid Him," she lamented. To this the angels did not need to give any answer, for they could see the figure of Jesus standing behind her.

Mary could sense that someone else had joined her, and so she quickly turned around and tried to make out who this stranger might be. It wasn't one of her own group, she decided; so it had to be the gardener who cared for this burial ground of Joseph of Arimathea. Even while He spoke to her, Mary did not at first recognize Jesus' voice, as He kindly asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Whom are you looking for?" (v.15). All she could do was wail at Him accusingly, "Sir, if it is you who have taken Him away, tell me where you have laid Him; and I will carry Him off"-as if somehow her womanly strength would be equal to such a task.

It was at this point that the kind stranger revealed Himself to Mary by reverting to His familiar voice as He addressed her by name, "Mariam!" Immediately she realized that the body she was looking for stood right before her, no longer a corpse but now a living, breathing human being-and yet more than that, the incarnate God. "*Rabbouni!*"

she exclaimed (that is to say, "Master!") and cast herself at His feet. It was only for a brief moment that she touched Him; for He gently withdrew Himself from her, saying, "Don't keep touching Me [the negative imperative *me mou haptou* implies discontinuance of an action already begun], for I have not yet ascended to My Father."

This private interview with the risen Lord did not continue much longer, so far as Mary was concerned; for He commissioned her to hurry back to the group in the city and prepare them for His coming to join them in His resurrection body. "Go to My brethren," He said, "and tell them I am going up to My Father and your Father, My God and your God" (John 20:17). Excited from this experience Mary ran back to Jerusalem found Peter & John and told them the amazing news.

2.1.7 Jesus appears to the women

Jesus revealed Himself to the women on their way to Bethany and greeted them (Matt. 28:9). (The Greek *chairete* here probably represents either the Hebrew *salom* or the Aramaic *slama*. Literally the Greek means "Rejoice!" whereas the Hebrew means "Peace!") They cast themselves at His feet and kissed them as they clung to Him. Jesus reassured them as they were adjusting to the shock of seeing Him alive again, "Don't be afraid." Then He continued with a mandate similar to the one He had given earlier to Magdalene: "Go and pass on the word [*apangeilate*] to My brethren that they are to depart for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

2.1.8 Jesus appears to Peter

While Peter was waiting in Jerusalem for the other disciples to return, he must have been very curious about this encounter with Jesus that Mary Magdalene had told him about. He must have gone back to the spot where Mary said she saw Jesus to see if he could see Jesus too. John would have stayed back at the planned meeting spot in case the other disciples showed up. Luke 24:34 says later that evening the disciples in the house of John Mark in Jerusalem had learned from Peter that he had already seen Jesus and had talked with Him. It is interesting to note that Paul also mentions that Christ appeared to Peter before He revealed Himself to the rest of the Eleven (I Cor. 15:5).

2.1.9 Jesus appears to 2 disciples on road to Emmaus

The next event that first Easter Sunday involved two disciples who were not of the Eleven (the number to which they were reduced after the defection of Judas Iscariot). Cleopas was relatively undistinguished among the outer circle of Jesus' following; at least he is hardly mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament record. As for his companion, we are never even told what his name was. As soon as Jesus had left them, the two wayfarers sped back to Jerusalem and told the disciples the news of their encounter with the risen Lord (Luke 24:33).

2.1.10 Jesus's 1st appearance to group of Apostles (end of Sunday)

Luke tells us that while the Emmaus travelers were finishing their report to the assembled believers, the Lord Himself entered through the locked doors and appeared in their midst (Luke 24:36), much to the amazement of all those who had not previously seen Him risen from the dead. He greeted them with His customary "Peace be with you" (the Greek *eirene hymin* doubtless represents the Aramaic *Slama ammkon* John 20:19). Then He hastened to allay their fears by showing them physical evidence of His bodily resurrection and restoration to life. "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your heart?" He asked (Luke 24:38), as He held out His pierced hands for them to see and removed His sandals to show the nail holes through His feet (V.39-40). He even uncovered the scar of the gash that the Roman spear had made in His side as He hung lifeless on the cross (John 20:20). "Look at My hands and feet," He said to them, "for it is really I". Feel Me and see, for a mere spirit does not have flesh and bones such as you behold Me to have" (Luke 24:39). John records that of the eleven, there was one who was not present, Thomas.

2.1.11 Jesus's 2nd appearance to group of Apostles (8 days later)

No one could ever expect Thomas to believe in anything so contrary to nature. Yet it was exactly one week later on the Sunday following Easter, that Jesus appeared to the group for the second time (cf. John 21:14). This time Thomas was present, that stubborn skeptic who had declared, "Unless I see the print of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into His side i.e., where the spear had entered His chest, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Jesus entered the room, again passing through the closed doors, He gave them the same general greeting as before: "Peace be unto you." Then He went up to Thomas and stood before him, saying, "Reach here your finger and look at My hands, and reach your hand here and put it into My side, and be not faithless but believing."

2.1.12 Jesus appears in Galilee to group of Apostles

We now pass to the third recorded interview between Christ and His apostles subsequent to the Resurrection. By this time the disciples had left Jerusalem and had gone up to Galilee to keep their rendezvous with Him as He had bidden them (Matt. 28:10; Mark 16:7). This was a much less formal occasion, and only five of them were present at the fishing expedition at least (Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John). While they were fishing the dawn mist came on them, they made out the form of a bystander greeting them from the shore. "Children," He called out to them, "you don't have anything to eat, have you?" "No," they answered Him. "Well then," the stranger shouted, "throw your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will have a catch!" This seemed very unlikely, but they complied nevertheless. Immediately the net ropes began to jerk and pull about this way and that, and it seemed as if they had run into a whole school of unwary fish. John immediately recognized that this was a special work of God, only Jesus could turn such dismal failure into thrilling success. "It is the Lord," he exclaimed.

2.1.13 Jesus appear to 500 on a mountain top in Galilee & meets with James

There may have been numerous other times of fellowship between Christ and His apostles during the remainder of the forty-day period between the Easter resurrection and the ascension of Jesus to heaven recorded in Acts 1:9. Luke simply indicates that Jesus was repeatedly seen (*optanomenos*) by His disciples over a period of forty days, and He taught them "concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). But the record of the Galilean retreat closes with a large assembly of Christ's followers quite possibly the gathering included more than five hundred at that time (cf. Cor. 15:6) on some mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16). Most likely during this time, Jesus met with his brother James (cf. Cor. 15:7a).

2.1.14 Ascension on Mount Olivet right next to Bethany (40 days later)

Christ's actual departure was from the crest of the Mount of Olives, not far from Bethany. As His final gesture there on the hilltop near Bethany, Jesus lifted His hands to bless His disciples (Luke 24:50); and in that attitude He was suddenly lifted up from the ground, to disappear from their sight beyond the clouds. As they stood there looking up, transfixed with wonder, two angels suddenly appeared beside them and assured them that Jesus would some day return to earth in the same form as they had seen Him ascend to heaven. With this glad assurance ringing in their ears, they made their way down from Olivet back to Jerusalem where they spent the next ten days until the pouring of Christ's Holy Spirit on them all at Pentecost.

2.2 NT Resurrection Accounts

Matthew 28	Mark 16	Luke 24 & Acts 1	John 20&21	I Cor. 15
Women travel to the tomb (early Sunday morning)				
1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.	1 And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.	1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.	1a The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher,	
2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?				
2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.				
Women see tomb and angels				
4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.	2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher.	1b and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.		
5 And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.	3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:			
5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."	6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.	5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, 7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8 And they remembered his words,		
Women leave and inform disciples				
2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him.				
8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.	8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.	9 And returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.		
10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.				
Peter & John run to the tomb				
12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulcher;	3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher.			
5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.				
and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves,	6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.			
8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.				
and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come		10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own		

	to pass.	home.		
Jesus appears to Mary and she informs others				
	9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.		11 But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher,	
	12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. 17 Jesus saith unto her, stop clinging to me; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.			
	10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.		18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.	
	11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.			
Jesus appears to the women				
	9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."			
Guard talk to Priest				
	11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.			
Jesus appears to Peter				
	5 And that he was seen of Cephas (Peter),			
Jesus appears to 2 disciples on road to Emmaus				
	12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.		13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.	
	14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16 But their eyes were covered that they should not know him. 17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. 22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; 23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. 25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?			
	13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.		33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon (Peter). 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.	
Jesus's 1st appearance to group of Apostles (end of Sunday)				
	14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.	36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.	19 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, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.	5b then of the twelve:
	37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.			
	40 And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.	20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.		
	41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43 And he took it, and did eat before them. 44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they			

		might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.		
		22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: 23 Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.		
Jesus's 2nd appearance to group of Apostles (8 days later)				
		24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. 26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.		
Jesus appears in Galilee to group of Apostles				
		16 But the eleven disciples went into Galilee,		
		30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.		
		1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself. 2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. 5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. 15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou was young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. 20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. 23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?		
Jesus appear to 500 on a mountain top in Galilee				
		16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.		6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.
Jesus appears to James				
		7 After that, he was seen of James;		
Ascension on Mount Olivet right next to Bethany (40 days later)				
		49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. 50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. A4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.		
	18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teachings them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.	15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.	A5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.	
		A6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? A7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.		
		17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.		
		A8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.		

	19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.	A9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.		
	A10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; A11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. heaven. A12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.			
	24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.			
Jesus appears to Paul (3 years later)				
	then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also,			

2.3 Reflections on the Resurrection Reconstruction

The reconstruction of the resurrection was accomplished by using the same chronology that is presented in each of the different accounts. In other words, the verse order for each account was kept constant as shown in Table 1 and Section 2.2. The fact that this reconstruction was accomplished by maintaining a consecutive sequence for all accounts shows in a most straight forward manner that the different accounts are chronologically consistent.

It turns out that each of the accounts left out certain events; however, this does not mean the authors were not aware of the other information. For example, even though Luke does not directly mention the personal appearance of Jesus to Peter that Paul mentions, Luke clearly implies it by the statement in v. 34. Also, Luke only mentions Peter running to the Tomb; however, by "them" in v.24 Luke clearly implies the other disciple, John, mentioned in John 20:3-10. Even though John only mentions one woman, Mary Magdalene, going to the tomb, it is evident that he knew others went by Mary's use of "we" in v.2. Matthew does not mention Jesus's first appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem, but he implies it by his statement in v.16 that Jesus has designated the mountain to the disciples previously at most likely one of the appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem; however, Jesus could have mentioned this to the Disciples at another time. Even if Mark ends at verse 8, he is still aware of future appearances for he had an Angel informing the women of the future appearance in Galilee. Thus, all the authors of the 4 Gospel accounts have just been shown that they know they are omitting information.

It is interesting how that the comments that do not state but imply an event, match the sequence and description of the events presented by the other accounts. These implied events fit in the same sequence as Table 1 which was ordered based upon the stated events with no consideration of these statement which imply an event. Thus, the fact that these statements that imply events match the other accounts should be considered as corroborating the other accounts. Since they are implied, most likely their corroboration is unintentional which appears to make a case for multiple attestation which is consider a criterion that supports the view that the testimonies are reliable (Section 4.1.3 of Ref. 15). For example, the 500 witnesses mentioned by Paul are considered by the critics as complete fabrication. However, when the accounts are lined up, these witnesses fall right in place with the event that fits best with such a large group, the appearance of Jesus on the mountain in Galilee mentioned by Matthew, which appears to be another unintended corroboration. The other accounts mention at total of 11 appearances. Paul's placement of the 500 between the first appearance to the group of Disciples and the appearance to James constrains the 500 to 3 appearance events of which the mountain is one of them as indicated by Table 1. Thus, there is a probability of 3/11 of this occurring. Paul's mention of Peter meeting Jesus before the meeting with the Apostles also corresponds to the off-handed remark of in Luke v.24. Paul placing the meeting of Peter before the first appearance to the group of Disciples constrains the Peter meeting to 4 of 11 appearance events. Thus, a probability of 4/11 of this occurring. The probability of both of these successes happening by chance, which would be the case if these stories were developing independently, is $(3*4)/(11*11)=0.099$ which is an interesting result.

When the omissions are considered and the testimonies are lined sequentially by a straight forward process, they have been shown to be chronologically consistent. If all the accounts reported the exact same thing it would look like they all just copied each other and the critics would actually have more reason to doubt the trustworthiness of these testimonies. Therefore, there really is no reason to consider these omissions as evidence for lack of reliability. If anything the omissions indicate that the authors were not intentionally copying one another rather it appears they were getting their information from different reliable sources.

The accounts are a combination of unique and common information. The common information has been shown to correlate with the other accounts as explained above. The correlation with Paul's account written in 56AD appears to be unintentional. Thus, it appears that the passing of the information common with Paul's account about the resurrection from Paul's time to the time when the Gospels were written was done reliably. The differences do not produce any definite contradiction as explained below; thus, they do not provide a strong reason to doubt the accounts reliability. Therefore, there is no strong reason to doubt that the information was passed down reliable from the early 30's. The differences do require another source of information aside from Paul.

3. ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS & REBUTTALS

3.1 Introduction

The critic assumes that when the author reported events in sequence, the author meant that nothing occurred in between; however, the evidence mentioned in Section 2.3 definitely shows for each account that this assumption is inappropriate. In the Greek, Luke begins Chapter 24 verse 49 & 50 with the weak connective non-temporal particle (greek *de*) which would be better left untranslated (5). This particle does not necessarily mean no other resurrection event occurred in between. Thus, a reasonable interpretation is that Luke is just laying side by side the first appearance in Jerusalem (36-48) with the events on the final ascension day (49-53). He is not necessarily packing into one day all the events between the resurrection and the ascension, as his fuller account in Acts 1 shows Mark's "And" (greek *men oun*) in 16:19 is most commonly translated "so then" because this greek term is used to show a logical connection rather than a temporal connection. The logical connection is between the completion of Jesus's appearances over the last 40 days and his final ascension which concluded his ministry. It does not necessarily imply that no resurrection event occurred in between the first appearance to the apostles and ascension which concluded His appearances just after His resurrection. Obviously, the NT authors did not intend to record everything they knew about the event which this criticism does not recognize even though John states in 21:25, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did".

The accounts do use pronouns such as, "they", "women" and "we", that do not necessarily define precisely who they are referring to. The critics take advantage this freedom to identify these pronouns with an individual that makes the account contradictory. However, as shown in Section 2.1, individuals can in a reasonable manner be identified with these pronouns such that a consistent reconstruction of a single story is maintained. This critical approach can make most any comparison between testimonies which use pronouns appear contradictory when they are not necessarily.

Since the account of the guard is recorded only in Matthew, the critics are suspicious that there never really was a guard at the tomb. However, critics should consider certain features about this account that do not fit well with their legend hypothesis (5). In addition, critics should consider other features about the resurrection account that do not fit well with the legend hypothesis (8).

Since each of 5 different resurrection accounts have been shown in a reasonable manner to be consistent, each of the alleged contradictions can be addressed in a reasonable manner as shown below. These criticisms used to be available through the McDowell Chapter 10 criticism at internet site Ref. 9. However, the author of this site has now presents a more neutral position (Ref. 10) because of the arguments presented by Ref. 11.

3.2 When did the women visit the tomb?

Matthew: "as it began to dawn"; (28:1) Mark: "very early in the morning... at the rising of the sun"; (16:2, KJV); "when the sun had risen"; (NSRV); "just after sunrise"; (NIV) Luke: "very early in the morning"; (24:1, KJV) "at early dawn"; (NRSV) John: "when it was yet dark"; (20:1)

Explanation by clarification: All these statements center around the same time, sunrise. The process of these women meeting, getting their stuff prepared and walking to the tomb could have spanned the time period from John's "dark" to Mark's "when the sun had risen". The "went" in Matt. 28:1, Mark 16:2, and Luke 24:1 and the "came" in John 20:1 all refer to the same greek verb, *erchetai*, which could be translated either way for these four cases (5).

3.3 Who were the women?

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

Explanation by omission: Just because an author reports a certain person went there does not mean that the other actually thought nobody else went there. None of these accounts say that there was only one. John 20:2 implies that there were other women with Mary Magdalene.

3.4 What was their purpose?

Matthew: "to see the tomb"; (28:1) Mark: had already seen the tomb (15:47), brought spices (16:1) Luke: had already seen the tomb (23:55), brought spices (24:1), John: the body had already been spiced before they arrived (19:39,40)

Inappropriate Comparison: Mark 15:47 refers to Friday night when Jesus was laid in the tomb so it does not involve the same event.

Explanation by clarification: It is quite reasonable that they wanted to see the tomb and apply more spices. People often visit grave sites with two similar purposes; 1) to see the site and, 2) leave flowers.

3.5 Was the tomb open when they arrived?

Matthew: No (28:2) Mark: Yes (16:4) Luke: Yes (24:2) John: Yes (20:1)

Explanation by clarification: In Matthew's account the tomb could have been opened while the women were on their way before they arrived. Just because the author of Matthew mentions these events sequentially does not necessarily mean the author intended to state they all happened at the same time.

3.6 Who was at the tomb when they arrived?

Matthew: One angel (28:2-7) Mark: One young man (16:5) Luke: Two men (24:4) John: Two angels (20:12)

Explanation by clarification: Matthew's angel on the stone was when it scared away the guard and was prior to the women arriving.

Explanation by omission: Just because one person reports a certain angel was there does not mean that person actually thought no other angel was there.

Explanation by additional information: Angels as individuals that look like glorified men resolves this alleged conflict between the accounts.

3.7 Where were these messengers situated?

Matthew: angel sitting on the stone (28:2) Mark: young man sitting inside, on the right (16:5) Luke: two men standing inside (24:4) John: two angels sitting on each end of the bed (20:12)

Explanation by clarification: Matthew's angel on the stone was when it scared away the guard and was prior to the women arriving. The Greek phrase translated "stood by" in Luke often had just the meaning "appeared to" (Ref. 5). Thus, Luke could be translated, "two men appeared to them in dazzling apparel"

Inappropriate Comparison: John 20:12 setting is obviously the later appearance of Jesus to Mary.

3.8 What did the messengers say?

Matthew: (28:5-7) Mark: (16:6,7) Luke: (24:5,7) John: (20:13)

Explanation by clarification & omission: These messages can be easily shown as complimentary rather than contradictory (Ref. 5).

3.9 Did Mary Magdalene know Jesus when he first appeared to her?

Yes, she did (Matt. 28:9) vs. no she did not (John 20:14)

Inappropriate comparison: The appearance of Jesus to the women in Matt 28:9 is obviously not the same event as the personal appearance of Jesus to Mary mentioned in John 20:14.

Explanation by clarification: The "they" in Matt. 28:8,9 could refer to the women besides Mary Magdalene mentioned in the other accounts. Even if it does refer to Mary Magdalene since it could have occurred after the first appearance to Mary, the two accounts could still be consistent. After Jesus's first appearance to Mary, Mary could have met with the other women and on their way to inform the disciples in Bethany they could have met Jesus.

3.10 Did the women tell what happened?

Matthew: Yes (28:8) Mark: No (16:8) Luke: Yes (24:9, 22-24) John: Yes (20:18)

Explanation by clarification and omission: Mark's awkward and abrupt ending at v.8 may be due to the rest being lost because the oldest manuscripts end at v.8. If the original Mark actually ended at verse 8 saying the women told no one, the Author would still be aware of future appearances, for the Author records an Angel informing the women of the future appearance in Galilee (16:7). Also, since the author is writing about the resurrection, obviously the Author believes the sighting of the resurrection occurred and was told to others. Thus, it is plausible that Mark may have intended to mean the women were in such awe that they said nothing for just the moment as they hurried back to tell the disciples.

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

Matthew Yes (28:7-8) Mark: Yes (16:10-11) Luke: Yes (24:6-9,23) John: No (20:2)

Explanation by clarification: Mary may not have seen the angels, rather upon seeing the empty tomb she may have ran back, before the angels appeared, to tell Peter in John 20:2 that Jesus's body was taken. In this case the "they" in Matt. 28:5 could refer to the women besides Mary Magdalene mentioned in the other accounts and Mark may just not have mentioned Mary Magdalene leaving.

Inappropriate comparison: The Matthew "Yes" refers to what the angels told the women that went into the tomb, not necessarily what Mary Magdalene told Peter. The Mark "Yes" refers to the response of Mary to the appearance of Jesus so it is a different event. The Luke "Yes" in 24:9 does not refer to a specific quote of Mary.

3.12 When did Mary Magdalene first see Jesus?

Matthew: before she returned to the disciples (28:9) Mark: before she returned to the disciples (16:9,10) John: after she returned to the disciples (20:2-14)

Explanation by clarification of omission: The author of Matthew could have meant that by the time the event in Matt: 28:9 occurred the women had already met with the disciples and reported to them that they found the tomb empty.

Explanation by omission: Just because the author of the Gospel of Mark omitted the empty tomb report to the disciples does not necessarily mean the author intended to state it did not happen.

3.13 Could Jesus be touched after the resurrection?

Matthew: Yes (28:9) John: No (20:17) vs. Yes (20:27)

Explanation by Clarification: John 20:17 actually is just Jesus saying to Mary "stop clinging to me" which does not mean Jesus could not be touched because she was touching Jesus (Ref. 4,5).

3.14 After the women, to whom did Jesus first appear?

Matthew: Eleven disciples (28:16) Mark: Two disciples in the country, later to eleven (16:12,14) Luke: Two disciples in Emmaus, later to eleven (24:13,33) John: Ten disciples (Judas and Thomas were absent) (20:19,24) Paul: First to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. (Twelve? Judas was dead). 1 Cor. 15:5 .

Explanation by clarification: Mark's two disciples are the same as Luke's two in Emmaus which according to Luke (24:34) knew that Jesus had already met with Peter so they both agree with Paul. Paul's "the twelve" refers to the collective group of disciple which is a term he used often. Luke's "the eleven" may have also been his collective term for the disciples. John does not specifically state 10 but is implied because Thomas was missing and Judas was dead.

Inappropriate comparison: Matthew's "eleven" is the group traveling to Galilee, not those in the upper room.

3.15 After how many days did Jesus lead disciples up a mountain?

Jesus led Peter, James, and John up a high mountain after six (Matt. 17:1, Mark 9:2), eight (Luke 9:28) days.

Inappropriate comparison: These references have nothing to do with the resurrection, rather events well before then.

3.16 Where did Jesus first appear to the disciples?

Matthew: On a mountain in Galilee (60-100 miles away) (28:16-17) Mark: To two in the country, to eleven "as they sat at meat"; (16:12-14) Luke: In Emmaus (about seven miles away) at evening, to the rest in a room in Jerusalem later that night. (24:31-36) John: In a room, at evening (20:19)

Explanation by omission: Matthew's omitted the 1st appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem but he implies it by his statement in v.16 that implies Jesus had designated the mountain to the disciples previously at most likely one of the appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem.

Explanation by clarification: Mark's country is Luke's road to Emmaus. Mark's "eleven", Luke's "to the rest" and John's "room" are all the same event and are consistent. John's "evening" and Luke's "night" center around the same time.

3.17 Did the disciples believe the two men?

Mark: No (16:13) Luke: Yes (24:34)

Explanation by clarification: Luke 24:34 is just stating what the two disciples from Emmaus were saying, and Mark's "unbelief" is a reference to the other disciples some of whom may not have believed yet.

3.18 What happened at the appearance?

Matthew: Disciples worshipped, some doubted, "Go preach."; (28:17-20), Mark: Jesus reprimanded them, said "Go preach"; (16:14-19), Luke: Christ incognito, vanishing act, materialized out of thin air, reprimand, supper (24:13-51), John: Passed through solid door, disciples happy, Jesus blesses them, no reprimand (21:19-23)

Explanation by Clarification: The materialized Jesus in Luke's account is the first appearance to the group of disciple as is John's. Matthew's "Go preach."; and Mark's "Go preach" could be both at the ascension site. Jesus could have said go preach at the first appearance and repeated himself later.

Inappropriate comparison: Matthew's "some doubted" in v.17 is at the mountain, which is a different event from the rest.

Explanation by omission: Just because the author of John doesn't mention the reprimand, does not mean the author intended to state it did not happen.

3.19 Did Jesus stay on earth for a while?

Mark: No (16:19) Compare 16:14 with John 20:19 to show that this was all done on Sunday, Luke: No (24:50-52) It all happened on Sunday, John: Yes, at least eight days (20:26, 21:1-22) Acts: Yes, at least forty days (1:3)

Explanation by omission: Luke's "And" (greek *de* see section 3.1) at the beginning of 24:49 & 24:50 and Mark's "And" (greek *men oun* also see section 3.1) in 16:19 means they are about to list another event that occurred, it does not mean that these authors intended to state no other events occurred in between.

Explanation by clarification: The Acts forty days is the time to the ascension. This includes John's eight days, which is the time between the two first appearances to the group of disciples.

3.20 Where did the Ascension take place?

Matthew: No ascension. Book ends on mountain in Galilee, Mark: Jerusalem (16:19), Luke: Bethany (24:50-51), John: No ascension, Paul: No ascension, Acts: Ascended from Mt. of Olives (1:9-12)

Explanation by omission: The author of Matthew just left the ascension out of his account, which does not mean the author intended to state it did not happen. Also, v.18-20 could be placed at the appearance at the mountain top in

Galilee with Jesus repeating similar comments at the Ascension. The “And” in Mark 16:15 is the common term used throughout his gospel for starting the description of another event. It can be seen throughout his Gospel, it does not mean that it occurred immediately afterward, as this critic assumes. Thus, Mark does not actually specifically state where the ascension occurred.

Explanation by clarification: Luke’s passage can just as well be translated “out as far as the path to Bethany” (5). The Mount of Olivet is on the path to Bethany and right next to it so Luke’s mention in Acts of the ascension site at The Mount of Olivet is consistent with his other statement in his Gospel.

3.21 Reflections on the Alleged Contradictions & Rebuttals

The criticism makes 9 obviously inappropriate comparison which makes obvious the criticism goes to inappropriate extremes. The criticism avoids obvious identification of features of the accounts that are explained by a reasonable clarification of the language. The critic’s many complaints about omissions are not justified especially considering the evidence in Section 2.3. The additional information in Section 3.6 is trivial concerning an evaluation of the reliability of these accounts.

One difficulty is the problem that a straight forward interpretation of Matt. 28:5 implies Mary Magdalene did see the angels at the first visit to the tomb and John 20:2 and 13 do not state, but imply that Mary Magdalene did not see the angels at the first visit to the tomb. As explained in Section 3.9, 3.11 and 2.1.3, Matthew’s “women” in 28:5 could refer to other women actually mentioned in the other accounts such as Salome. It may have been just another one of the omissions that Matthew did not mention the other women in 28:1, just as John did not in 20:1 but made evident he was aware of them in 20:2. There are clear examples where Matthew’s intended antecedent for the pronoun is not actually mentioned in the passage but implied. Matthew 19:13 (NASB) has the Disciples rebuking “those who brought the children”. Parallel passages Mark 10:13 and Luke 18:15 actually mention these people while Matthew does not but implies them as those who brought the children. In a similar way by “women” in 28:5 Matthew could of been referring to the other Mary and Salome; thus, not necessarily Mary M.

4. CONCLUSION

As recorded by the five New Testament accounts, the resurrection was quite a complex event. These accounts have been shown by an essentially straight forward and reasonable process to produce a single consistent reconstruction. This process is often necessary when reconstructing a complex event from the testimony of multiple witnesses. Based upon this reconstruction, each of the alleged contradictions are addressed so the reconstruction passes the critical test of consistency. The pieces can fit together to make a consistent picture. Thus, an internal comparative analysis does not imply any reason to consider them unreliable.

In a remarkable way, the different accounts compliment each other when they are lined up sequentially. There are apparently unintentional, remarks that corroborate the other accounts. This supports the view that the New Testament resurrection accounts are reliable testimonies of a complex event that actually occurred as reported.

The discussion started with a point that both most critical and traditional scholars agree on, that Paul was somehow dramatically transformed into a believer. The critical scholars claim that part of Paul’s reaching out process to the Gentiles was the fraudulent development of a miraculous Jesus, for a selfish purpose of lying to promote the early Christian Church. However, the teaching of Jesus are to be honest and not to lie, and just two chapters prior to mentioning the resurrection appearances Paul includes ethical unselfish statements on love (1 Cor. 13) which are so impressive that they are the most common readings throughout the world at wedding ceremonies. Typically, the more unselfish an individual, the more reliable they are for presenting the truth as they best know it. Since the NT accounts were written while eyewitnesses were still around, the authors would have known if the accounts were real or not. This supports the view that Paul and his organization were a honest reliable group rather than some fraudulent propaganda team.

If the critics are correct that there was no bodily resurrection of Jesus, then the most ancient recording of what may be the most influential ethical statement and intentional fraudulent statement were written side by side, probably in the same sitting, by a man who was transformed by them, tried to live by them, and died for them. Remarkable coincidences demand a satisfactory explanation.

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