Are there Contradictions in the Resurrection Accounts?

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**Foundational Scripture:**

**Intro**:

* Skeptics and unbelievers seek to diminish the debunk the account of Jesus’ resurrection by dissecting the literature and rhetoric of the events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection in the four gospels. This particular subject is considered to be among one of the most investigated in the bible because of what is said to have happened on that day. If Jesus raised from the dead and all the events surrounding it are true, it demands everything from us. But if it is not true, then Christianity is false and we are left to decide what’s right and wrong for ourselves.
* In investigating Jesus’ resurrection, one does not have to be a scholar to observe that there are clear similarities between the resurrection account in all four gospels. But there are also several differences between the four gospels and how they record the events of that Sunday. The question is: **Does this present a problem to the credibility of the bible and does it show that Jesus’ resurrection is fictitious and false?**

1. **Similarities in the Fourfold Account of Jesus’ Resurrection**
   1. The following is a list of similarities between the resurrection events in all four gospels:
      1. Several women witness Jesus’ death and He is subsequently buried (Matt. 27:55-66; Mk. 15:40-47; Lk. 24:49-56; Jn. 19:25, 38-42).
      2. The Resurrection takes place on Sunday in the early morning (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1).
      3. Several women come to the tomb (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1-2; Lk. 24:1, 10; Jn. 20:1).
      4. The stone was rolled away from the entrance of the tomb (Matt. 28:2; Mk. 16:4; Lk. 24:2; Jn. 20:1).
      5. Angels are present and speaking to the women (Matt. 28:5-7; Mk. 16:6-7; Lk. 24:5-7; Jn. 20:12-13).
      6. The tomb was empty (Matt. 28:6; Mk. 16:5-6; Lk. 24:3, 6, 12; Jn 20:2-8, 11-13).
      7. People including disciples and non-disciples are in shock, fear and amazement (Matt. 28:4-5, 8, 10; Mk. 16:5-6, 8; Lk. 24:4-5, 12, 37; Jn. 20:11, 16-17).
2. **Differences in the Fourfold Account of Jesus’ Resurrection**
   1. For a list and summary of the differences between the resurrection events in all four gospels please see the information on the attached pages.
3. **Are these supposed problems reconcilable?**
   1. Note that these variations in recording are not major at all but are minor and in most cases a further development of what the other authors did not mention. Matthew and John, being apostles, were eyewitnesses to these events and recorded the events from their viewpoint.
   2. Mark and Luke were students and companions of the apostles and they recorded the resurrection events concerning Jesus with reference to the information given them in conjunction to their own thorough investigations (Lk. 1:1-4).
   3. The differences in these accounts are usually utilized by skeptics as evidence to suggest that Jesus’ resurrection was fabricated and that the bible contradicts itself. The problem with such accusations is that small differences in a major story are generally considered to be the strongest evidence to authenticate the truth of the events that took place.
   4. If all four gospels were exactly like each other, it would be far more likely that it would be fabricated. The minor variations recorded in each are significant evidence that proves the events to be true as opposed to false.
   5. Even though all four gospel accounts differ with respect to the resurrection of Jesus in minor details, they all tell the exact same story in regard to the big picture and the important conclusion (See point number 1).
   6. The authors of the four gospels do not seek to give their audiences an exhaustive record of every single detail and the order in which it happened with respect to Jesus’ resurrection. Their purposes are one and the same and that is absolutely reflected in all four accounts despite minor variations: **Jesus rose from the dead!**
   7. Nevertheless, the four accounts can be harmonized in a manner that in fact shows the bible does not contradict itself and that Jesus’ resurrection is completely accurate as recorded by the four gospel authors:
      1. Several women including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Salome, the “other” Mary and possibly more women went to the tomb on Sunday. They intend to complete the anointing of Jesus’ body. It was likely still dark as they set out and by the time they got there the sun had risen.
      2. Prior to their arrival, an angel rolls away the stone that sealed the tomb and there is an earthquake. The guards assigned to guard the tomb became very fearful and left.
      3. The women arrive at the tomb and find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Mary Magdalene leaves the rest of the women there to go and tell Peter and John what happened.
      4. The women still at the tomb encounter two angels in the tomb who tell them that Jesus is risen and commands them to go and report to the disciples what they have seen and what has been told to them.
      5. Peter and John come to the tomb and observe only the linen wrappings and face cloth but no body and they then leave. Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb and encounters the two angels and subsequently Jesus Himself.
      6. The other women (not including Mary Magdalene) encounter Jesus as they leave to go and report to the disciples what the angels told them. Following this, Jesus makes several appearances to His disciples including several private appearances (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-8).

**Sources:**

Clay, C. *“Comparing the Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* (March 6, 2019). Retrieved from https://owlcation.com/humanities/Comparing-the-Gospel-Accounts-of-the-Resurrection-of-Jesus-Christ.

“*Do the gospel resurrection accounts contradict each other?”* (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.compellingtruth.org/resurrection-accounts.html.