

# Answering Dan Barker's Easter Challenge

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Verse five of Proverbs 26 says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes."

**IF we fail to challenge a fool who attacks the very truth that God has given, we allow them to appear wise and also risk having them appear wise to our children & grand children**

- **When someone says that the Bible is wrong, that is when we answer the fool giving a reason for the faith within!**

**I have produced a chart with the parallel accounts of the resurrection from all four Gospels and included a summary of the events that proposes how all of the various details can be reconciled.**

- **Some may ask why have I gone to all this trouble?**

**Two reasons:**

- **It helps us see again the richness of having four witnesses**
- **It also answers one of the great challenges that has been leveled against the faith:**

**That the various accounts of the resurrection cannot be reconciled with each other... Many claim these accounts are full of contradictions! For example, Dan Barker issues the "Easter challenge" asking Christians to "tell me exactly what happened on the day that their most important doctrine was born." Mr. Barker, interestingly, says we should be eager to take up the challenge because 'without the resurrection, there is no Christianity.'**

**That is exactly Paul's point in I Corinthians 15 where he says, "if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty... "16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"**

**So the Bible and the worldly skeptics agree on one point: No resurrection – No salvation!**

- **This is why things like the Easter challenge are made & why it is important to give an answer to these fools!**

**The challenge from Mr. Barker is simple: "without omitting a single detail from these separate accounts, write a simple, chronological narrative of the events..." Now Mr. Barker and his skeptic friends claim that no one has met the challenge despite the fact that there are several on the Internet. I have offered a brief summary with the actual Scriptures which meets his challenge, but we must remember that unbelief will still have a hardened heart...**

- **The soldiers who WITNESSED the resurrection did not bow in faith, but ran off and accepted bribes to tell lies about what actually happened.**

**So I do not think, without the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit, that Mr. Barker is going to read my summary and fall to his knees in repentance before the Lord of Lords, -- though he certainly will one day! [Philippians 2:1-8]**

- **My summary is not the only way all of the details can be accounted for but it confirms that we have been given a faithful account.**
- **It gives an answer for our faith and I trust that it strengthens our faith!**

So let me walk you through the summary as our means of seeing an overview of the resurrection: First we see that a group of the women who followed Jesus begin their trip to the tomb in the dark and arrive just after sunrise. This is the first example of how easy it is to bring the details together without contradiction... When this is where the skeptic sees nothing but contradictions because all of the accounts did not have the same list of women and one speaks of it being dark while the others talk of sunrise.

In a sense, what they are demanding is that God give us **ONLY** the summary rather than various accounts as He chose to do! The various texts reminds us of the richness we have in the accounts God has chosen to give us...

- In Matthew's account we see that resurrection of Jesus brings another great earthquake.
- An angel rolls back the stone, sits upon it and terrifies the soldiers.

The women arrive and see the stone rolled away... I believe it is at this point that Mary Magdalene runs to tell the disciples what has happened: Not often how this is presented but I think it is the best way to reconcile the accounts. The other women enter the tomb and see two angels: The one who sat on the stone then speaks to the women.

- Let me stress, there is no problem with the varying descriptions of nor the number of angels

Angels can be fearful, like they were to the soldiers or appear like men like they do when we entertain one of them without even knowing it was an angel. We see these variations in these various accounts... There can be two or more but only one of them speaks, so it is not a contradiction for Mark to only mention the one who is speaking! *Let us suppose that Tom and his uncle come to explain a natural disaster to several chroniclers and Tom does all the talking...*

-- One chronicler could say, Tom came and said

-- One could say, Tom and his uncle came and said

-- Another could say two men came and said... All would be true!

Just for fun I took up Mr. Barker's challenge about not leaving out any details and would suggest the angel could have said something like this: 'Do not be alarmed, for I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here. See the place where they laid him? Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen, as He said! Come and see the place where He lay. And indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him as He said to you. Behold I have told you'

- Plausible and covers every word in the various accounts!

Now the women remember the words of Jesus & run to tell the others, saying nothing along the way [*I suspect they even stopped along the way as they tried to take it all in!*] Mary Magdalene returns to tell the disciples the body is missing and Peter and John run to the tomb. John & Peter arrive at the tomb after the women have left: John comes to believe and Peter goes away marveling at what he had seen.

- Mary now returns to the tomb after the others have left.

Mary enters and see the two angels who ask her why she is weeping: John makes sure we do not miss the fact that one angel sat at each end, just like the two cherubim on either side of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies!

The Scriptures are like fine jewels that can be viewed from various angles...This is SO true of these resurrection accounts. The reminder of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies is followed in John's account by the garden scene with a marriage that runs from Genesis to Revelation... From where we see Adam in Eve in the Garden of Eden to the garden City of Jerusalem coming down as the Bride of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation. Thus it is very fitting that Jesus makes His FIRST appearance to Mary Magdalene in the beautiful garden scene where the air would have been filled with the fragrance of all those spices!

- Possible homework: See how this beautiful scene is foretold in the Song of Solomon

Mary now returns to tell the disciples the Good News!

Jesus makes His 2nd appearance to the other women who are still on their way to the disciples...

Jesus confirms what they have heard: The women continue on to tell the disciples the Good News! They are not believed.

Luke refers to Peter's trip to the tomb, which could also be a 2nd trip [*Jesus makes an appearance to Peter at some point and we are given no details*] Jesus also meets the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Those disciples return to Jerusalem after the women have returned as well as Peter:

- The other disciples are in turmoil proclaiming what happened BUT not believing it!

**Again, I would argue that the various accounts showing both belief and unbelief present the more accurate picture of what happened that day!**

Soon after this Jesus makes an appearance to those who are now gathered in Jerusalem: Mark, Luke and John give the details of what Jesus said during this appearance. Jesus showed them His wounds and ate in their presence confirming His physical resurrection.

Matthew tells us what happened with the soldiers who were at the tomb during the resurrection giving us a clear contrast of belief and unbelief... The soldiers refuse to acknowledge the very event they witnessed... *Just like these modern skeptics who are paid to write books to destroy the faith!*

- Contrasted with the faithful disciples who, though they had doubts would give their very lives defending the truth of the resurrection!

John after giving the account of Jesus visiting the Disciples with Thomas a week later goes on to say this: "30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Paul writing to the Corinthians confirmed what John said: We have life in His name IF we hold true to what was preached: "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..."

As we said earlier:

- The worldly skeptics and Paul agree that the resurrection is the KEY!

Let us not be those who seek to tear this truth down, or even those who would be silent in the presence of such attacks.

Let us be those who with Paul boldly proclaim the life-giving truth of the Gospel...

**He is risen: He is risen Indeed!**

# Harmonizing the accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus

<u>Matthew 28</u>	<u>Mark 16</u>	<u>Luke 24</u>	<u>John 20</u>	<u>Summary</u>
<p><i>1</i> Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.</p> <p><i>2</i> And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.</p> <p><i>3</i> His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.</p> <p><i>4</i> And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.</p> <p><i>5</i> But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <i>6</i> He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. <i>7</i> And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."</p> <p><i>8</i> So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.</p>	<p><i>2</i> Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.</p> <p><i>3</i> And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"</p> <p><i>4</i> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large.</p> <p><i>5</i> And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.</p> <p><i>6</i> But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. <i>7</i> But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."</p> <p><i>8</i> So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.</p>	<p><i>1</i> Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them,* came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.</p> <p><i>2</i> But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.</p> <p>Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <i>4</i> And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. <i>5</i> Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? <i>6</i> He is not here, but is risen!</p> <p>Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, <i>7</i> saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'  <i>8</i> And they remembered His words.</p>	<p><i>1</i> Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark,</p> <p>and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.</p> <p><i>2</i> Then [Mary Magdalene] ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."</p>	<p><b>A group of the women who followed Jesus begin their trip to the tomb in the dark and arrive just after sunrise.</b></p> <p><b>The resurrection of Jesus brings another great earthquake</b></p> <p><b>An angel rolls back the stone, sits upon it and terrifies the soldiers</b></p> <p><b>The women arrive and see the stone rolled away</b></p> <p><b>Mary Magdalene runs to tell the disciples what has happened</b></p> <p><b>The women enter the tomb and see two angels</b>  <b>The one who sat on the stone speaks saying,</b>  <i>'Do not be alarmed, for I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here. See the place where they laid him? Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen, as He said, come and see the place where He lay. And indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him as He said to you. Behold I have told you'</i></p> <p><b>The women remember the words of Jesus &amp; run to tell the others, saying nothing along the way</b></p>

<u>Matthew 28</u>	<u>Mark 16</u>	<u>Luke 24</u>	<u>John 20</u>	<u>Summary</u>
	<p><i>9</i> Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.</p> <p><i>10</i> She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.</p>		<p><i>3</i> Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb.</p> <p><i>4</i> So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. <i>5</i> And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. <i>6</i> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, <i>7</i> and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. <i>8</i> Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. <i>9</i> For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. <i>10</i> Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.</p> <p><i>11</i> But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. <i>12</i> And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. <i>13</i> Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."</p> <p><i>14</i> Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. <i>15</i> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." <i>16</i> Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, <a href="#">File</a> "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). <i>17</i> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"</p> <p><i>18</i> Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.</p>	<p><b>Peter and John run to the tomb</b></p> <p><b>John &amp; Peter arrive at the tomb: John comes to believe and Peter goes away marveling at what he had seen</b></p> <p><b>Mary now returns to the tomb. She enters and see the two angels who ask why she is weeping</b></p> <p><i>[John gives us the picture of the two angels standing on either side of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies!]</i></p> <p><b>Jesus makes His first appearance to Mary Magdalene in the beautiful garden scene that is foretold in the Song of Solomon</b></p> <p><b>Mary returns to tell the disciples the Good News!</b></p>

## Matthew 28

**9** And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

**11** Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. **12** When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, **13** saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'" **14** And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." **15** So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

## Mark 16

**11** And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

**12** After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. **13** And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

**14** Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

## Luke 24

Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. **11** And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

**12** But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

*[Long account of the Disciples on the road to Emmaus]*

**33** So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, **34** saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" **35** And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

**36** Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." **37** But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. **38** And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?" **39** Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." **40** When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. **41** But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" **42** So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. **43** And He took it and ate in their presence.

## John 20

**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, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." **20** When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. **21** So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." **22** And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

## Summary

**Jesus makes His 2<sup>nd</sup> appearance to the other women who are still on their way to the disciples**

**The women continue on to tell the disciples the Good News!  
They are not believed**

**Luke refers to Peter's trip to the tomb, which could also be a 2<sup>nd</sup> trip**

*[Jesus makes an appearance to Peter at some point and we are given no details]*

**Jesus meets the two disciples on the road to Emmaus**

**Those disciples return to Jerusalem after the women have returned as well as Peter:  
The other disciples are in turmoil proclaiming what happened BUT not believing it!**

**Soon after this Jesus makes an appearance to those who are now gathered in Jerusalem**

**Mark, Luke and John give the details of what Jesus said during this appearance**

**Jesus showed them His wounds and ate in their presence confirming His physical resurrection**

**Matthew tells us what happened with the soldiers who were at the tomb during the resurrection giving us a clear contrast of belief and unbelief**

