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“What Resurrection?”

by Ken Koskinen

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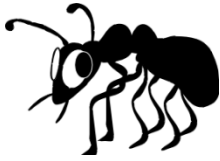
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A GRAND BEGINNING!

To celebrate the launching of my website I've posted my ebook *"What I Told My Son About the Bible: Things the Clergy Doesn't Want You to Know."* It's about 185 pages of entertaining and

About Ants Publications

Ants stands for (**A**)nswers (**N**)onsense (**T**)ruthfully and the "s" pluralize(s) and stands for repeatedly. Ken Koskinen is the founder of **Ants Publications** and this site is currently a vehicle to post his writings; but eventually others may also be able to contribute. Ken writes academic essays, books, poetry and some short comedy pieces. His writing is not well suited for certain individuals. He does **not** for example accept the teachings of **any** major world religion. There are many myths and teachings that are nonsense and he writes factual rebuttals. He exercises **the freedom of the press** but it isn't **his intention to offend others**. **Please do not read his material if you aren't open-minded.**

Ken primarily writes from a scientific mode of mind. This means his information processing leads with reason and observation but intuition and emotion assist. When he writes serious essays and books he uses the persona, "**Ken Koskinen**." When he writes poetry he's "**The Naked Psalmist**." When he writes comedy he takes on one of several personae such as "**Ken the Wildman**" or "**SureFoot Helms**."

People who want to discuss the issues and themes raised on this site are invited to log on to the **Ants FORUM**. It might take time to attract some traffic to the venue but "big things always grow from small beginnings." You can also post your opinions and/or questions in **Comments**.

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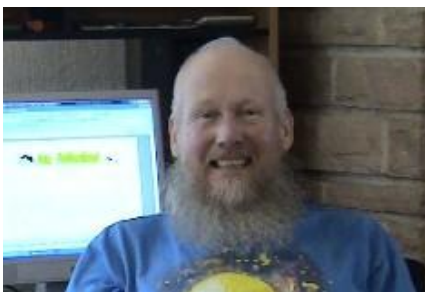


informative discussions between a scholarly Father "Dad" and his intellectually gifted son, an early teen named "Charlie." When Charlie asks Dad about the Bible the fun begins.

Dad informs him of the opposite point-of-view of the modern clergy. You will encounter scriptural contradictions, failed prophecies, historic and archaeological evidence that doesn't support the Bible. You will also learn how the clergy tries to make their religions more believable by taking verses out-of-context, ignoring modern science & reforming the data to conform to their ideas about the Bible.

In the process readers will also learn about how the Bible came into being. It's written from Dad's perceptive and he is a tenured professor, teaching Biblical studies from a rational and scientific perspective at "Forevermore College!" Down loaders be forewarned ... this ebook is a mind blower!

To stay abreast of new poetry, comedy & science articles: **Go To:** <http://antspub.com>



About the Author

I was born in Helsinki, Finland but immigrated with my family to Toronto, Canada when I was about 2 -1/3 years old. My Finnish given name is "Jarmo Olavi Koskinen" but I use the English nickname "Ken" Koskinen. I'm a naturalized Canadian and have lived most of my life in Ontario, Canada. I studied at Centennial & Niagara Colleges in Ontario but earned my BSc. at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California. I majored in psychology but also studied history and biblical subjects.

I love to write. As a writer my goals are to **inform/educate**, **stimulate/challenge** and **inspire/entertain** readers. I write serious pieces as well as some comedy. Over the last several years I have taken a great interest in science with an emphasis on physics & cosmology. I am currently writing my first science book, **"The Big Vibe: Steps Towards a Theory of Everything."** In this work I hope to add to the quilt of theoretical science. I do not currently plan to make it available on this site since I hope to publish with a scientific book publisher. However you can learn more about current unsolved scientific mysteries by reading my posted essays.

I enjoy working out with the 1/2" thick steel cable skipping rope I invented, **"The Skip Walker/Jogger."** I use it to skip walk; that is, I skip rope while walking for several miles. You can view my video of me skip walking. I've also written the lyrics to a light country/rock song **"The Unemployment Line."** I'm neither a musician nor a good singer but you can view me singing the song, without accompaniment. I hope somebody with some real talent, like Billy Ray Cyrus, contacts me and puts music to it and turns it into the next big hit! I've also invented a very good carpet cleaning detergent and a skin cream that helps to clear up blemishes and outbreaks. It is also a good topical dressing on burns. Both of these products are in the research and development stage.

I also love nature, comedy, good food and beer. I love to learn and enjoy the mystical awareness and feeling of being alive while exploring & experiencing life within **"All That Is!"** It is the **"everything"** in which we have our being!





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What Resurrection?

Prelude and Stern Warning

This essay is not intended for faith oriented readers. This is **not** about religious beliefs but rather a critical look at the biblical accounts, historical references and related issues about the alleged bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The main question in this essay is: *did it really happen?* *If you are a believer, you might find rational biblical criticism to be unsettling. There is a lot of other literature that is far more suitable for you!*

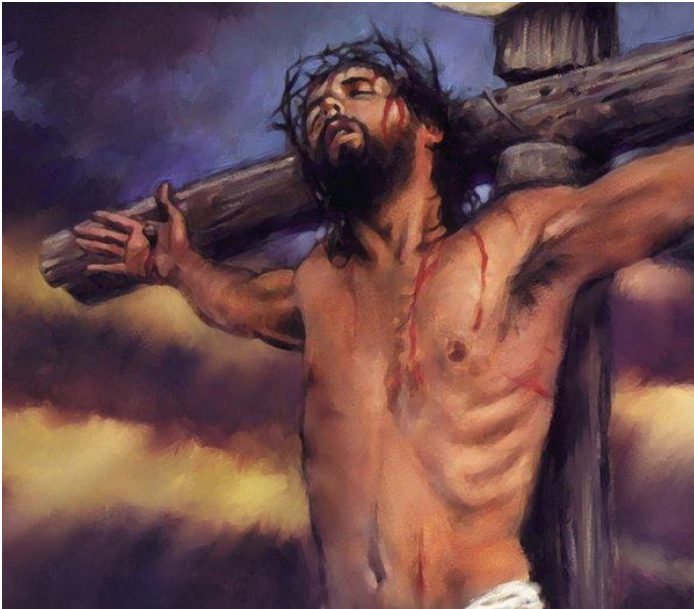
It should be stated that people are free to believe anything they like. A belief is a creative act of the mind where the blanks are filled between things known & unknown. Sometimes beliefs turn out to be true at least due to the preponderance of the evidence and/or beyond a reasonable doubt. At this point we no longer need to believe since the evidence shows we know it. Other times beliefs or assumptions are falsified by subsequent research. However we all believe some things but caution is advised since anyone can be wrong.

People are commonly taught that Jesus was crucified and entombed and then resurrected from the dead sometime around 30 AD in Jerusalem and/or its environs. The biblical accounts are used to bolster the belief in the resurrection which forms the foundation of Christianity, the world's largest religion. There is much talk about faith and relatively few Christians and others spend much time in researching and evaluating the scriptural record and the arguments about the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This essay is one such attempt.

This is another warning for faith-oriented readers. Please do not read any further! Some people might not be able to handle the information contained in this essay and it can lead to emotional upset and anxiety. It is only fair that those who ignore this warning do not blame me for any resultant negative feelings. *I think I have given enough fair warning and have tried to discourage faith readers from reading on!*

The Lack of Genuine Physical Evidence

There isn't any physical evidence for or timely documents that speak of Jesus' crucifixion, his entombment and alleged postmortem appearances. The biblical records form the earliest references and were written some decades after the events. Over the ages there reportedly have been many relics claiming to be genuine such as: pieces of the cross, the spear head that pierced the side of Jesus' corpse while it still hung on the cross (only mentioned in John's gospel [Jh. 19:32-37](#)), the chalice or cup used at the last supper (only mentioned in the three synoptic gospels [Mt. 26:26-28](#); [Mk. 14:22-25](#); [Lk. 22:17-18](#)) or suggested by some as a cup used to collect Jesus' body fluids during the crucifixion (not supported in any gospel). There may have been other objects of potential interest such as the vessel that originally contained the sour wine what was offered to Jesus on a sponge attached to hyssop or reed as he hung on the cross ([Mk. 15:36](#); [Mat. 27:48](#); [Lk. 23:36](#); [Jh. 19:29](#)). The claimed findings of some so-called Holy Grails are sprinkled over history and remain mysterious but none have been proven.



There is also the Shroud of Turin that some believe was the burial cloth that Joseph of Arimathea wrapped on Jesus' body. This shroud is the most famous amongst a few others and each is associated with some fantastical claim. The earliest mention of it or something like it appears in some questionable 14th century records. More reliable mentions appear in 15th century records and are less contested. The shroud has suffered some damage over time such as in a fire in 1523 in a chapel of Chambéry, capital of the then Savoy region. Nuns sowed in some patches and subsequent repairs were made in 1694 and again in 1868. Since 1578 it has been kept in Turin, Italy and has been there ever since. It became the property of the

Holy See in 1983 and is currently under the care and control of Catholic authorities. It is kept in the Royal Chapel of Turin Cathedral but is now under a laminated bulletproof glass in an airtight case containing gases that help preserve it. In 2002 the shroud underwent a major restoration. All of the patches were removed and its backing cloth was changed. The shroud was last displayed publically in 2010.

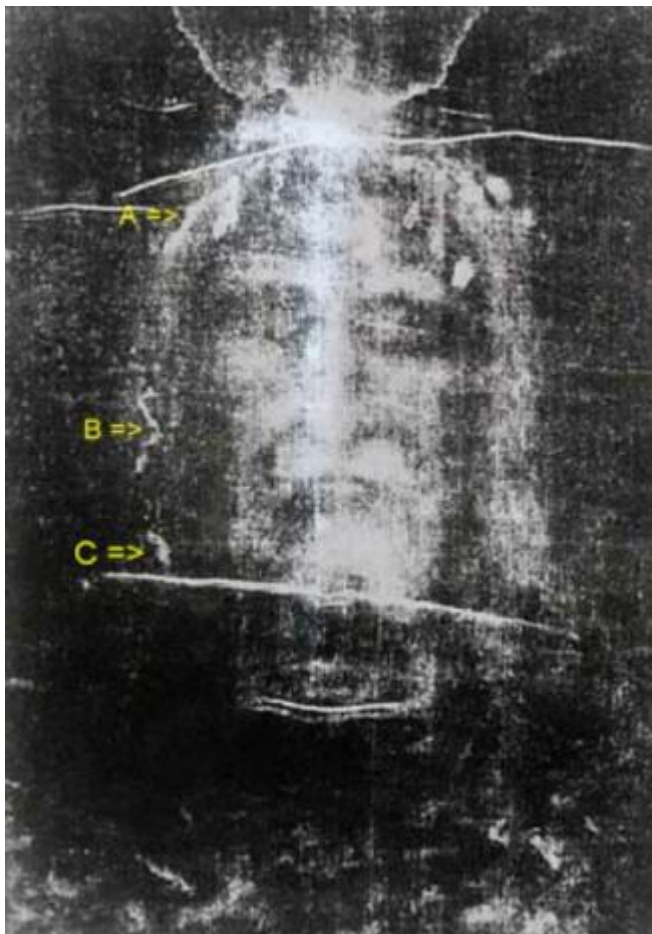
When seen by the naked eye the dim sepia images viewable on the cloth are barely discernable. After the first photograph of the shroud was taken public interest skyrocketed! In May 1898, Secondo Pia an amateur Italian photographer was allowed to firstly photograph the shroud. He took the first shoot on the evening of May 28, 1898. He was startled by the visible image on the negative plate. It gave the image the appearance of a positive image, which implies that the shroud image is effectively a negative of some kind. It showed much more detail. Pia was firstly accused of doctoring his photographs, but was vindicated in 1931 when Giuseppe Enrie, a professional photographer, duplicated his results. In 1978 Miller and Pellicori furthered the photographic record by taking ultraviolet photographs of the shroud. [1]

Part of the mystery of the shroud is the image of a face and body do not have any discernable brush stroke marks; so it wasn't painted. Recently an artist showed how such an image can be produced by brushing on dry powdery pigments onto paper. The paper is then pressed onto a cloth by applying pressure via a wooden spoon or some similar object. The resultant cloths are able under computerized photography to create 3D images similar to those the Shroud of Turin produced. It does look as if the image on the shroud could have been produced by an early and simple artistic technique although the blood stains on the linen remain an issue. Testing has identified the marks on the shroud as blood but the DNA is so damaged its type cannot be identified. Perhaps they were applied using the same artistic technique using dried and powdered blood?

In 1988 small cloth piece was cut out of the shroud and radio carbon dated to the 14th century A.D. Some cite a 16th century fire as the cause of the far too young date. Experts disagree as the dating was done at three different sites, the linen cloth samples were cleaned and a fire could not have caused them to misdate to only 650 or so years old. Other studies since have called the Shroud's 1988 dating into question and it might only be resolved by another round of tests but the Catholic authorities are not too anxious to allow anyone to cut more material out of the shroud. The black and white negatives taken of the shroud show the individual had long hair, beard and on his head and forehead are marks perhaps left by of a crown of thorns, and clear markings on

the body suggesting the individual suffered a whipping. We do not have any indication in the NT that Jesus wore his hair shoulder length long like some of his contemporaries who had taken the religious Nasserite vow. Also the crown causes me to raise eye brows. In fact it isn't even mentioned in Luke's gospel. Luke speaks of a taunting of Jesus but by Herod's men and they only put a robe on him (Lk. 23:6-12). Matthew and Mark tell a different story. These sources claim Pilate's soldiers placed the robe and a thorny crown on Jesus and taunted and abused him. Further both of these gospels claim that afterwards they put his own clothes back on him before leading him out to be crucified (Mat. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20). It is unlikely they left the crown on his head since there isn't anything in the gospels that indicate he wore it during the walk to Golgotha and/or while on the cross.

John also mentions the crown of thorns and the robe and Pilate even paraded him wearing them in front of a crowd of hostile Jews (Jn. 19:5). John agrees with Matthew and Mark by claiming



Jesus was scourged or flogged before he was taken out to be crucified (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Jh. 19:1,16). However, Luke does not mention it (Lk. 23:20-26). Victims of Roman crucifixion were often flogged but it doesn't mean it happened in every case. In John's gospel, even after Pilate had Jesus scourged he still intended to release him (Jn. 19:6) so his depiction is not necessarily a pre-crucifixion routine. There is at least some room to doubt the scourging. The common picture of Jesus on the cross wearing the crown of thorns and having whip marks all over his bloody body on the cross may well be partly fabricated. The crown still on his head is the most doubtful.

The image on the Shroud of Turin includes hints of possible broken remnants of such a crown that were still stuck in the subject's hair. The blood stains on the scalp are evident but I wonder about the light line "A" that forms a small arc in the hair. You can also see a zigzag line "B" lower down on the same side in the hair. There is also another odd-shaped figure "C" further down from "B" also in the hair. These look like they could have resulted from small remnants of a thorny

crown still stuck in the subject's hair. You can view the image and decide for yourself.

If the corpse had any remnant pieces of the thorny crown entangled in its hair, Joseph of Arimathea would have probably removed them before the corpse was wrapped. John's gospel alone claims that Nicodemus was with Joseph and he brought about 100 pounds of a mixture of aloes and spices. They would have used it to prepare the body prior to wrapping or binding it with strips of linen (John 19:38-42). Curiously Luke claims it was the women who had come with him from Galilee who after viewing where Jesus was laid; prepared spices and fragrant oils. They clearly intended to treat the body after the Sabbath (Lk. 23:50-56). Mark claims it was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James who observed where he was laid. After the Sabbath it was the two Mary's and Salome who bought spices to anoint the body (Mk. 16:1). Matthew says the observers were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. The two ladies named Mary returned

after the Sabbath but there isn't any mention of them bringing spices and/or oil (Mt. 27:61 – 28:1). Comparisons of details in the gospels often show such contradictions.

If we follow John's lead they would have used aloe and spices to clean up the blood as they applied it all over before it was wrapped in linen. Corpses do not keep bleeding since the circulation system has come to a halt but some blood flow can occur due to gravity out of large wounds and from pressure in areas applied on the body during its transport. However studies indicate the amount of blood on areas of the shroud is much more consistent if the individual had been still alive. [2] In any case these questions about blood stains, those about the whip marks and the crown of thorns add to other issues like dating the shroud. I think it was a later staged event based on a popular but inconclusive image of the crucifixion. The debate about how the image was produced and its age will rage on but there still isn't any way to directly connect this shroud with Jesus of Nazareth. It is interesting to note that even the Catholic authorities do not make outlandish claims about the authenticity of the shroud or any other venerated object.

Swoon Theories of the Resurrection

I am not suggesting Jesus wasn't crucified or that he didn't die. I think there was a historical Jesus and he was executed by the Romans. We do have some later day records of Romans making references to Jesus/Christianity but this is in light of the spreading new religion. [3] Some people have claimed his death on the cross was faked and he survived and lived out his life. There isn't any good evidence for this but these are called swoon theories of the resurrection and variations have been suggested over the centuries. On the one hand swoon theories provide a naturalistic explanation as to why Jesus' followers found the tomb empty after the Sabbath was over. Yet I find the overall evidence for such theories to be very assumptive and unbelievable.

One version claims Jesus went on and even married and had children and this claim was made in a popular book, *"Holy Blood, Holy Grail."* It was published in 1982 and was penned by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln. The trail of evidence they present is very elaborate, including the mysterious activities of the medieval Knights of Templar. The evidence of the cover up alone encompasses hundreds of years of suggestive connections. It is hard to find more yarn so loosely knitted in any other conspiracy theory.

If someone is crucified and hangs on the cross for some 6 or more hours they don't simply get down & walk away. When they nail victims to the cross flesh, blood vessels, nerves, bones, ligaments are or can be pierced. In 1968 archeologists found the ossuary of an unknown individual named Yohanan benHa'galgol in Jerusalem. An iron nail was found spiked into his heel bone and another through a wrist indicating he had been crucified. Victims could bleed for hours on end but much depends on how badly blood vessels are damaged and the clotting capability of an individual's blood. They were also hung out in the daylight and subject to sunstroke and dehydration. The torturous experience also causes hypovolemic shock, a state of decreased blood volume, characterized by sodium depletion. The physical stress and depletions can also trigger heart failure in some individuals.

The most common cause of death is said to be due exhaustion asphyxia or in plain language, victims develop increasingly difficulties in breathing until they suffocate. They have to pull up in order to inhale and to do this they need support from their legs. Since their ankle bones were nailed it makes every breath excruciatingly painful. The impaired dynamics of breathing is also evident in the sole account in John's gospel of the soldiers breaking the legs of the thieves when time was running out (Jh. 19:31-33). After this, death follows within minutes. Still victims can survive for some time if they succeed in breathing but speaking is very difficult. This is evident from the short sentences that Jesus apparently spoke while on the cross. Only Matthew and Mark

agree on what he said while Luke and John are different accounts (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34; Lk. 23:34; 43; Jh. 19:26-27; 30) but collectively it consists of seven different statements. Even this is suspect since victims are constantly short of breath, depleted of energy and in great pain.

There are swoon theories that suggest Jesus was given some kind of drug that made him appear dead but even then, the chances of surviving a brutal crucifixion are slim. Flavius Josephus was a Jewish contemporary historian who was a leader of the Jewish rebellion in Galilee that spread to Judea and culminated with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. He had gained his freedom and won the respect of the Romans and wrote that he had saved two Galilean friends who were crucified. He had convinced the Romans to take them down. One died afterwards but the other survived. [4] The chance of survival depends on factors such as: the physical condition of the victim, the method of crucifixion, luck that the nails did not break too many blood vessels and the length of time the victim hung. Crucifixion is a terrible but efficient method of execution. The bio-physical factors alone make any conspiratorial swoon theory highly untenable. I think Jesus died on the cross; it's just that plain and simple. It is one thing cited in all the gospels that I do agree with.

The Biblical Record on the Resurrection

What we have all learned or been taught about the resurrection of Jesus stems from the records in the Bible. The NT gospels contain the most elaborate accounts but these were not the first documents that mention the resurrection. The earliest mention has to be given to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. It could have been written within twenty or so years after the death of Jesus. We will look at the details in this letter shortly.

The synoptic gospels that we have already discussed are so named as Matthew, Mark and Luke follow a similar story line. The Greek suffix "syn" means "same" and the root term "optic" means *view*. The textual evidence as accepted by the majority of NT scholars indicates that Mark was firstly written and was used independently as a source document by both the writers of Matthew and Luke. I will not go into all the details but we can tell this from the shared and similar story line verses. Also Matthew and Luke often improve on the language or grammar Mark used but in different ways. Further both Matthew and Luke diverge from each other in different accounts and this indicates that Matthew probably did not use Luke as a source or vice versa. As we have already seen the synoptic gospels do contradict each other in details.

It also appears that Matthew and Luke could well have used other source documents that are unrelated to Mark. These two gospels share some Jesus sayings and teachings that although used in differing contexts do share much in common. This has led some NT scholars to surmise at least one other possible source document was used by both writers. They have dubbed this one source "Q" from the German term "Quelle" which means source. Given that it is highly unlikely that Matthew and Luke collaborated, it is reasonable to assume this body of teachings existed in later oral transmission and in written forms. It also helps to make the textual content case for Mark as clearly being the first gospel written i.e. the latter two contains shared statements the earlier account does not. [5]

The synoptic gospels emphasize the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of god. The message is that a government from heaven was going to be established on earth. It would liberate the Jewish nation from the domination of the mighty Roman Empire. The implication is they would be freed from oppression, taxes and would become free to conduct their affairs and worship without their meddling (Lk. 1:67-75; 16:16; Mt. 10:6-8; Mk. 1:14-15). Jesus Christ would come back and be the Davidic king and rule with a rod of iron and with righteousness and conquer all nations.

However during his ministry Jesus was a secretive Messiah who encouraged Peter and the other disciples to keep silent about his identity (Mt. 16:16-20; Mk. 8:27-30; Lk. 9:18-21). Jesus only admits it to the Sanhedrin during his make shift trial before being escorted to Pilate. At times he claimed to his followers that he would be executed and then resurrected and come back as the Son of Man. Jesus gave his specific prophecies about the persecution of Peter, Andrew, James and John and others in the Jesus' group during a time of tribulation. This would be time of many falling away from the original faith. This would precede a desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem referred to as "the abomination that makes desolate." All of this had to happen before the destruction of the temple buildings and Jerusalem at large. During this conflict Jews would be killed in the war and survivors would be taken captive and sent/sold into slavery. After this time of trouble, there would be heavenly signs and the Son of Man would come in the clouds of heaven and with the sound of a trumpet his angels would gather the elect. Finally the Kingdom of God would be established on earth. It was all going to happen before the current or Jesus' generation of people passed away (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21).

There was some persecution of Christians before the temple was destroyed but the early Jerusalem Christians essentially held to the faith. There was not any "abomination that makes desolate" set up to stand in the temple but the buildings were destroyed beginning in 70 AD. The expected heavenly signs and the Son of Man on clouds of heaven and the angels also did not show. The Kingdom of God failed to arrive and life went on as usual. The early Christians were distressed; when was Jesus coming back? This is clearly evident in several of the letters we have in the NT. These writers continued to look forward to the coming of the Son of man and the Kingdom of God. Even "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" which is now the last book bound in the New Testament speaks of "things which must shortly take place" (Rev. 1:1). It was written to bolster the faith of those who believed Jesus was coming back very soon. "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." (Rev. 1:7). "Those who pierced Him" is an obvious reference to the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus. Of course they would still have to be alive to see the Son of Man coming.

Revelation is in many ways a very obscure book, full of unusual symbols and in this sense similar to the OT book of Daniel. However we should use clear statements to aid us in understanding unclear symbolic verses and as we've seen these tell us the second coming was still imminent to the readers of the day. It meant some of the then contemporaneous people would have to be alive to witness Jesus' second coming i.e. Roman soldiers. The years passed and it simply didn't happen. The early church had to change its focus in order to remain relevant.

John's gospel is an independent later creation and it creates its own story line, a retelling of the life of Jesus. I think it was written to divert the early church's attention away from the failed prophecies and onto the person of Jesus. He is portrayed as the being who gives people spiritual salvation. This is the dominant message in the book and the Kingdom of God message of the synoptic point-of-view is comparatively down played.

John's gospel goes further in its remake. Jesus is not secretive about being the expected messiah as he even basically admits it to his Jewish enemies long before his encounter with the Sanhedrin (Jn.10:22-30). He also essentially told them he is god (Jn. 8:48-59). He also made statements like he is one with the Father and if you see the son you have seen the Father (Jn. 8:13-29). Many Jews of the day believed God would resurrect everyone to the final judgment. Jesus openly claimed he is the manna that came down from heaven; he had the keys to the resurrection and would resurrect everyone who believed in him on the last day (Jn. 6:34-40). Not only was this an admission that he thought he was god but he also changed the format of the

expected resurrection by claiming he would only raise those who favor him. This is a very different Jesus! It is very hard to believe any first century rabbi would have openly said these kinds of things and survived. He would have most certainly been stoned to death.

There is much more in John's remade gospel. The ministry of Jesus in the synoptics lasts for only about a year. In John's gospel it spills over two years based on three Passover seasons Jesus is noted to observe. This includes the last one in Jerusalem when he met his fate. Also the account of the turning over of the money changer's tables in the temple area occurs during his first visit to observe the Passover in Jerusalem (Jn. 2:13-17) and not during his only and final one as depicted in the synoptics. This is a curious discrepancy since that event as depicted in Mark really angered the leadership and after which they plotted his demise (Mk. 11:15-19; Mt. 21:12-13). John also contains accounts of miracles not mentioned in the other gospels such as turning water into wine (Jn. 2:1-10) and perhaps the most pertinent one in our discussion is that of resurrecting Lazarus' decomposing body from the dead (Jn. 11:17-44).

When Was Jesus Crucified?

The truth is we don't know exactly when Jesus was executed by the Romans. We do not have a single timely document such as a Roman record of death. If such records of execution were kept at Jerusalem then perhaps they were destroyed during the Roman siege and destruction in 70 A.D. Nor has any collaborating document been found at Caesarea Maritima, the then Roman seaside capital of Judea and home of Pontius Pilate. However, in 1961 a block of limestone was found there in the Roman theatre that clearly bears Pilate's name. The so-called "Pilate Stone" is damaged but part of a dedication by Pilate of a *Tiberieu* is visible. It is suggested to have been a tribute of some kind to Tiberius the Emperor. They even have a replica standing outside in the area for tourists to see. The original is kept under museum conditions.

We also have coinage, the bronze "prutah" minted by Pilate bearing believable dates and name of the Emperor on one side and that of his mother, Julia, on the other. The extra-biblical evidence



tells us Pilate was a real historical figure. However we should expect some archeological findings to agree with biblical depictions of events. The mistake is to think they always do and that is not the case. [6]

Today we determine days from midnight to midnight but casually think of a day as beginning at sunrise and of night beginning after sunset. However in the Jewish calendar, days were calculated from sunset to sunset. When we try to determine the day of a NT event we have to keep their reckoning in mind.

We only have the four gospels that speak of the Jesus' execution and surrounding events but these were written some decades afterwards and as we will see they contain several contradictions. The first thing that confuses people is that all of the

gospels place the crucifixion on the “Day of Preparation” (Mt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:31). However in the synoptics the Day of Preparation has to mean the day before the weekly Sabbath. Jesus had already eaten the Passover meal with his disciples the evening before (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 12-17; Lk. 22:7-13). Jesus is crucified at 9:00 AM Friday morning (our reckoning) also known as the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread. The day that followed was the weekly Sabbath day. It means there were two Sabbaths or holy days, the Passover and then the weekly Sabbath, occurring in the same week. All of the synoptic accounts claim the first arrivals to the tomb came early morning of the first day of the week. It further proves the writers want us think the crucifixion was on a Friday and the resurrection occurred sometime before early sunrise on Sunday morning. It is simple arithmetic; Friday the day of the crucifixion, Saturday was the Sabbath and Sunday was day when the disciples learned the corpse was missing and some of them experienced post mortem appearances of Jesus.

In John’s gospel “the Day of Preparation” literally means the time to get ready for the Passover. John pictures Jesus being crucified at the same time when the Passover lambs were killed. The day that followed was both the Passover and the weekly Sabbath, known as a double Sabbath. This is determined by the account of Mary Magdalene arriving firstly at the tomb while it was still dark on *the first day of the week* (Jn. 20:1) on what we call Sunday. The key is to realize the Day of Preparation in John is a different one compared to the synoptic gospels. This is just one of many contradictions between John’s gospels and the synoptics. Of course one should not think there are not contradictions within the synoptics and I have mentioned some already.

John’s account also differs from the other three gospels in the account of the “Last Supper” which occurred before the feast of the Passover (Jn. 13:1-2). In his portrayal in the aftermath of dining Jesus washes the feet of the disciples and then identifies his betrayer Judas Iscariot by giving him a piece of bread he had dipped. Judas leaves into the night (Jn. 13:21-30) and Jesus gives the rest of them a rather long speech (Jn. 13:21- 16:33). The story is very different compared to the Last Supper tale in the synoptics. Judas is identified in the synoptics as the one who had dipped his bread with Jesus in the dish but he doesn’t leave. Jesus goes on to institute the Lord’s Supper ritual by sharing bread (which is his body) and sharing wine (which is his blood) (Mt. 26:20-30; Mk. 11:18-26; Lk. 22:14-23). Luke’s account is a little different as Judas is not directly identified and the betrayer is merely “a hand that is with ME on the table” (Lk. 22:21) and the disciples also go on to have a dispute over who will be considered the greatest (Lk. 22:24-30). The differences are significant when compared in detail.

What I’ve said so far seems clear but there are other details that resist being included into the framework. There is the sign of Jonah the prophet cited in Matthew and Luke. Matthew’s account is most damaging since it has Jesus saying, “*For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and nights so shall the Son of Man be three days and nights in the heart of the earth*” (Mt. 12:40; cp Lk. 11:29-33). So, do the math. Friday before sunset to early Sunday before sunrise, does not equal three days and nights. However there is also the account in Luke of the statement made by one of the two disciples who were unaware they were talking to the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmas. He told Jesus of the events that occurred and concluded, “*today is the third day since these things* (i.e. the crucifixion) *happened.*” (Lk. 24:13-21). Does a part of day count as a full day? The answer in this usage is, yes. Also, in our modern reckoning some agree and just count Friday, Saturday and Sunday and it equals, “today is the third day since ...”

We have to conclude the obvious. The writers of the gospels did not work by committee. They worked independently and were swayed by differing traditions and/or sources and each told the story of Jesus from their point-of-view. When you try and blend it all together it amounts to nonsense. Some detail or another isn’t going to fit into another writer’s depiction. In fact Mathew’s

account contains contradictions within itself or one has to discount the literal meaning of the sign of Jonah being exactly three days and nights. If one takes that route it makes it look as if Jesus' own prediction failed. On the other hand the other gospels taken on their own are clean but throw in Matthew's more detailed account of the sign of Jonah or compare John to the others and both spell "p-r-o-b-l-e-m-s."

This is an unwelcome admission even for modern true believers and some researchers have developed models intended to fix things up. Some who don't like Friday, favor the crucifixion on either Wednesday or Thursday since they have to stretch out the time line to make it fit within Jonah's fishy story. However in every case some details in the gospels has to be downplayed or danced around or otherwise explained. One example is the idea that the Passover Jesus kept with his disciples in the synoptics wasn't the real one. It was merely a meal of the season but did not include eating the Passover lamb. However it is not what Matthew says. He clearly says it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened when the disciples asked Jesus where he wanted them to prepare the Passover meal. This was literally the Preparation Day as Mark adds about the same day it was "*when they killed the Passover Lamb.*" Luke says "*then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.*" (Mt. 26:17; Mk. 14:12; Lk. 22:7). That evening was the Passover and technically and more correctly it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a holy day or Sabbath. In the Jewish calendar it fell on the 14th day of the month of Nisan. (Ex. 12:5-6, 18-20).

There are also other problems with Wednesday and Thursday theories such as how did the ladies and Nicodemus buy spices and oils and or prepare them on a Sabbath? There are some creative and very different accountings while trying to solve the contradictions puzzle. There are lots of balls to keep in the air for those who deny the different accounts. The contradictions stand as they are inherent in the gospels and there isn't any problem free way to knit them together.

Trying to determine the year of the crucifixion is just as messy. An astronomical study of the years when Pilate was governor shows that Nisan the 14th on the Jewish calendar (usually suggested for the synoptics) fell on Thursday/Friday in the years 30 CE and 33 CE. These years are considered compatible with other general indications such as Jesus' age when he began his ministry; which Luke alone says he was about 30 years old (Lk. 3:23). This is in contrast to Nisan the 15th (usually suggested for John) which only fell on Wednesday/Thursday in 27 CE. This year is considered by many to be too early for Jesus' execution. [7] The problem in making these evaluations is we don't really know when Jesus was born, as Matthew and Luke differ significantly on the information given around Jesus' birth.

Matthew requires Jesus' birth to have occurred before Herod the Great died and this is usually given as 4 B.C. Luke makes no mention of King Herod (Lk. 2:1-7) and could accommodate a birth year several years later during a time when the Roman's supposedly conducted an empire wide census. This is said to have concurred with the time when Quirinius was governing Syria. The implication is the governor of Syria at this time also oversaw Judea. It should be noted the Herod mentioned later in Luke's Gospel was Herod the Great's grandson. He was the Herod who was visiting Jerusalem for the Passover. Pilate sent Jesus to him to interrogate since Galilee was his district to rule. This account is only depicted in Luke's gospel and we will see this again later in more detail (Lk.23: 6-12).

There are problems when one considers the Roman records or their lack. Luke depicts Joseph and Mary as having travelled to Bethlehem for the census since he was of the house of David. One problem is the Romans certainly did not require people to travel to their ancestral homes just to be counted. There also aren't any records that support even the broader idea expressed in Luke. The Romans did not conduct such *empire wide* censuses that included all sectors of the

population. They only counted Roman citizens in wider areas at best. However, Flavius Josephus mentions a local area census during the years 6/7 AD and links it to the creation of the Zealot movement and to some early resistance and even a local uprising in Galilee. In addition to the desire for autonomy, the fear that taxes would become burdensome was a chief concern or reason for organized resistance.

There have been several unsuccessful attempts in trying to reconcile Matthew & Luke's accounts alone. Then you have to blend it all with Roman records and what Josephus mentioned in his writings and you have got an irreconcilable mess. [8] The major point is the information contained in the gospels does not dovetail or collectively agree on these key dates. We cannot tell with any certainty the year or day Jesus was born and are similarly limited in knowing when he was executed.

I have to admit to my skepticism about the gospel accounts as per when Jesus was crucified. In addition to the differences in the accounts, I also question why did Pilate rush the execution? Especially, why did he feel the need to execute the three Jews during the feast? Jesus was the rising star who rode into Jerusalem with great fan fare. He was a much sought out rabbi, teacher and healer. Thousands of people would have been camping out all over the hills in and surrounding the city, amounting to a sea of tents. People must have been buzzing about the miracle making rabbi from Galilee. He was a real celebrity and the subject of most of the gossip at the feast. He had upstaged the priests. This is probably by far the greatest reason why the Jewish leaders were so jealous and angry and wanted to kill the Nazarene upstart.

I think it would have been highly unlikely that Pilate would have executed such a favored figure during the Passover season! He would have risked a riot. This concern was even voiced by the Jewish leaders when they firstly plotted against Jesus as they feared as much (Mk. 14:2). It is hard to think of a comparable event in modern times but imagine the outcry if the police had unjustly harmed Jimmy Hendrix or Janis Joplin or other performers at the 1968 Woodstock concert. It would have been a very stupid thing to do. It was also almost inconceivable for later public hangings when they still occurred within western nations for them to be had been held on religious holidays! During normal times, rarely have governing authorities acted so needlessly insensitively.

It is really hard to believe the Romans crucified Jesus during their holy season. Pilate's greatest interest would have been to keep the peace. He simply wanted the Jews to have their feast and then go back home. Why didn't he simply keep the men in jail until after the festival when most people would have begun to disperse? Pilate didn't even have to remain in Jerusalem and could have simply left orders for their execution. The events as depicted in the gospels do not make a lot of sense from the Roman point-of-view and they were the ones calling the shots. It might have been different if the Romans did not allow them to assemble for their celebration but this is clearly not the case. In fact the Jewish sacrificial religion was in some key ways not too different than Roman sacrificial religion. Pilate came to town during this time to observe the large assembly from within the empire and to maintain law and order. It was a special event. It is utter nonsense to think he executed a common people's star during this feast due only to some internal religious dispute. I think not.

The gospel writers on the other hand had good symbolic reasons to picture the rushed events in and around the Sabbaths. They wanted to make Jesus appear to symbolize or even be the final "Passover lamb;" only his blood was spilt for the remission of the sins of humanity at least as is depicted in John's gospel. I suggest this might be the reason why we read of so many events being forced into and around the days related to Passover in the contradictory stories. It is really hard to believe all of the events mentioned happened within such a short interval. In any case

there is little doubt that over time many versions of the story were being orally transmitted. The later Jewish Christian writers favored those that dovetailed with the Passover imagery. It's just turned out that John's scenario took the imagery to its most literal level. It can't be reconciled with the synoptics but it supports my main point. The gospel writers were motivated to include symbolic connotations in their accounts. What we read is not pure history but fabricated stories sprinkled with some facts mainly intended to inspire people to believe in the new religion.

Where Was Jesus' Corpse Laid?

Joseph of Arimathea is cited by every gospel as the one who went to Pilate and got permission to take and entomb Jesus' body. Other than what the gospels say of him little else, that is reliable, is known. Arimathea was a town within Judea and Joseph was a Jew. Two of the synoptic gospels claim he was a prominent council member (Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50) and some commentators suggest it means he was a member of the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. He was probably of the upper class and wealthy and is depicted in John's gospel as being a closet Christian (Jh. 19:38). He certainly was connected with the Romans as is witnessed by the fact that he was able to get



an audience from Pilate in short order. Pilate listened to him and even granted his request. After Joseph's fame grew as a result of having been mentioned in the gospels, several unsubstantiated stories or legends arose about him. [9]

The more pertinent question is where did Joseph entomb the corpse? John alone says the place where he was crucified, there was a garden. In the garden there was a new tomb and that is where they laid him (Jh. 19:41). The synoptic gospels say or imply he was laid in Joseph's own new tomb (Mt. 27:60, Mk. 15:46, Lk. 23:54) and in these locations women associated with Jesus watched the entombment and had intentions of coming back after the Sabbath. We will see more about this later.

If John's account is correct there wasn't a need for look outs because he was entombed some yards away in the garden area of the execution location. However, it is highly unlikely Joseph just happened to own the new garden tomb at the place of the crucifixion. The place of state executions would most probably have been on Roman public land and not on private grounds. However there was little time left before the beginning of the Sabbath and any trip to a distant tomb site is also unlikely. Even as it is, Joseph has to get to Pilate for an emergency hearing and this is after Jesus died. Then he has to go back with Nicodemus and tend to the entombment process (Jn. 19:38-42). There are lots of questions and few answers. However the two most popular suggested locations are the traditional Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the comparatively more recently suggested Garden Tomb. Both sites are in Jerusalem and have pluses or reason to believe and some minuses or reasons to doubt.

Another clue is three gospels speak of Jesus as being crucified at "Golgotha" i.e. an English translation of a Greek transcription that stems from an Aramaic term. The writers probably added the descriptive terms "the place of the skull." Luke alone refers to it as "Calvary" which is another English term but supposedly derived from a Latin word for "skull". [10] The main implication drawn from "the skull" reference has been the execution location must have had some formation that is

skull-like in appearance. Whether this is warranted is questionable but the assumption is reasonable. People have been imaginative in looking at hillsides in the Jerusalem environs and several have been fingered as possible locations.

People have certainly not given up searching for the tomb. In 2007 Simcha Jacobovici (director) and James Cameron (executive producer) released their documentary *"The Lost Tomb of Jesus"* alleging that the accidentally discovered Talpiot Tomb was the family tomb of Jesus. It was found in 1980 under a building construction site and is located about 3 miles from central Jerusalem. It is on the outskirts of the suburbs of the new city. The tomb housed ten ossuaries containing human remains, six of which were inscribed with names such as or the equivalent of Mary, Jesus & Joseph. There is one that translates as *"Jesus son of Joseph."* It is a reasonable effort but some discount it as the inscription is blurred. There is another translated as *"Judah son of Jesus."* There is a simple *"Mary"* inscription that Jesus family enthusiasts claim relates to Mary the Mother of Jesus. An important one is another Mary inscription that has been translated as *"Mary the Master"* a title of honor only seen in other but later contexts as a reference to Mary Magdalene. The implication is Jesus had married Mary Magdalene and they had a son name Judah. This is reminiscent of a swoon theory and good reason to raise an eye brow!

However the Jesus ossuary doesn't have the equivalent male title of honor that should read as *"Jesus the Lord."* Other experts have re-interpreted the *"Mary the Master"* line as *"Mariame and Mara"* indicating the remains of two females shared the same ossuary. This was a fairly common practice at the time. The difference in the later translation relates to other kinds of marks i.e.



perhaps mason's marks near the text that when included in translation result in different meanings and to interpreting a letter to be one type of character while it has equal chance of being another. It is all far from being as clear as some suggest.

One thing is agreed upon. The Tapiot Tomb is representative of a 1st century "second-burial" system. Firstly linen covered corpses were interred in tombs or sepulchers and allowed to decompose for a year or two. After the remains were naturally cleansed of flesh etc. the bones were placed into stone boxes or "ossuaries." Someone early in a family history had to have had the means to pay for the land and for the cutting out a rock-hewn tomb. Once this was done subsequent relatives only had to pay for ossuaries. Poorer people had to settle for the more common form of burial which was to bury corpses in shallow trench graves.

Mitochondrial DNA testing on the bones of the Talpiot Tomb showed Jesus and Mary were not related to the same mother at least and therefore could have been married. However it did not rule out other kinds of relationships such as father and daughter or mother-in-law and son-in-law. It does not prove the unknowns in question were married. Also all of the names found inscribed were very common in the 1st century and have been found in other tombs of the period. James Tabor, Professor of Religious History claims it is the clustering of the names in the Tapiot Tomb that increases its believability. Professor Camil Fuchs a statistics expert from Tel Aviv University says the names being together makes it quite surprising but not so much to make it statistically significant.

A further caveat is that one of the ten ossuaries contains the name "Yose" a nickname of Joseph and it is one of the names of a brother of Jesus. If they could place "James" another but more famed brother at the scene it would be big news. The film claims one ossuary went missing or was stolen. It does appear that one has been at least misplaced and subsequently unaccounted for, sometime after the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) had taken custody of the ossuaries. Perhaps it was missed placed and is sitting somewhere within their storage facilities. In any case,



the suggestion is the missing ossuary is the known and controversial “James Ossuary.” The patina was scrapped from the surface of the Talpiot ossuaries and analyzed and compared to that of the James ossuary. The results show they are from the right and same period and could have even originated from the same local quarry. However the most convincing part of the inscription on the James Ossuary is considered by some experts to have been forged to increase its value on the market. It is common to read the name “James” on an ossuary but it is hither to unknown to read another inscription “*the son of Joseph and brother of Jesus.*”

The jury is still out on the matters related to the James Ossuary but critics claim some of the evidence presented in “*The Lost Tomb of Jesus*” documentary/video is misleading at points and inconclusive at best. [11] The critics of the Talpiot Tomb as the family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth include Dr. Joan Taylor a historian, author and a Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King’s College London and Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand. [12] She implies it all looks like a

sensationalized account of an otherwise normal period family tomb that just might happen to have some common names similar to those in the gospels.



We still do not know *with certainty* where Jesus was entombed. There are those, mostly Protestants who argue for the Garden Tomb that wasn’t identified before the 19th century. The older traditional site is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and it can boast that more researchers including archeologists think it is the best bet. This includes Dr. Simon Gibson of W.F. Albright Institute in Jerusalem. He was one of the

original investigators of the Talpiot Tomb and has also worked on excavations within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the early 2nd century the traditional site had been a temple of Aphrodite/Venus. It was built by Hadrian who hated Christianity and Judaism. It was probably part of his reconstruction of Jerusalem as the new Roman city “Aelia Capitolina.” It was built after the Jewish revolt led by Bar Kokhba, 132—135 AD was crushed. In about 325/326 the Emperor Constantine ordered the pagan temple destroyed and that a Christian church be built on the site. During the excavation the alleged tomb of Jesus was discovered. Over history, there have been many restorations due to parts having been destroyed by either fire or military defacing. No one really knows what the entire site looked like in the 1st century.

The site has been the place of pilgrimages since at least the 4th century [13] and still is. There has been enough meddling and changes made at the site to make any theory less than conclusive. However, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is still a year round tourist attraction and a place of serious religious contemplation. Keep in mind, there are several other sites dedicated to biblical topics in Israel. Most are also unproven but provide visitors with a theme park-like experience while bringing to mind some biblical story.

I have to conclude that in the case of Jesus' execution, death, burial, disappearance of his body and alleged post mortem appearances there is not one stitch of physical evidence. If we use a crime analogy then we do not really know when it happened or where. In other words there isn't a crime scene and we do not have the corpse. Nor as I previously mentioned, do we have a single artifact related to any of the alleged incidents. This leaves us with what the New Testament says and this, as we will see, is based largely on hearsay evidence since the accounts were written years later. There are also some arguments that people have advanced about the resurrection but the biblical record is where we will go next.

The Contradictory Gospel Accounts

Even though the four gospels are not the earliest reference to the resurrection they are the most elaborate and therefore I have chosen to start inspecting the evidence within them. We are already used to seeing contradictions but the trend simply continues. Mark is usually considered the earliest account and I will therefore start with what he says. In many ways it is the most simplistic account and my summary of his account follows.

Mark's Account

Pilate interrogated Jesus and asked him, *"Are you the king of the Jews?"* but answered, *"It is as you say."* He did not say anything in his defense to the charges the chief priests had leveled against him. Pilate released Barnabas who had committed murder during an insurrection but the stirred up crowd called for Jesus' crucifixion. He granted their wish even though he doubted he had committed any crime. A garrison of Roman soldiers mocked Jesus by putting a purple robe on him and a crown of thorns and beat him on his head with a reed and spat on him. They put his own clothes and led him out to crucify him. Simon a Cyrenian was forced to carry the cross to Golgotha. They offered Jesus wine mingled with myrrh but he did not drink it. The soldiers divided his garments and cast lots to determine who would get which portion. On the third hour they crucified him and a sign with the inscription "THE KING OF THE JEWS" was fastened to the top of the cross. Two robbers were crucified beside him, one on his right and other on the left. Passers-by, the chief priests and scribes blasphemed him implying he should save himself and come down off the cross (Mk. 15:1-32).

On the sixth hour darkness came upon the land until the ninth hour and Jesus cried out *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Some people thought he was calling for Elijah and someone offered him a sponge full of sour wine on a reed. Jesus cried out with a loud voice and died. The veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Less, Joses and Salome and many others who came from Galilee watched the event from afar. Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and got permission to take the body. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where the corpse had been laid and that a stone had been rolled to close the entrance to the tomb (Mk. 15:33-47).

Very early on the first day of the week when the sun had arisen, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses bought spices to anoint the body. When they got there the stone had been rolled away and inside they saw a young man dressed in a long white robe and he proclaimed Jesus was not there but they would see him in Galilee. Mary Magdalene was first to see Jesus, then two unnamed disciples as they walked into the country saw him. Those who saw him told the others but they did not believe it. Finally Jesus then appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table of their residence and he rebuked them for their unbelief and instructed them to go and preach the gospel (Mk. 16:1-20). These post mortem appearances are depicted as having occurred in the Jerusalem area since no journey to Galilee is mentioned.

Matthew's Account

Matthew says the chief priests handed Jesus over to Pilate in the morning and urged him to put him to death. He claims that Judas who betrayed him was remorseful and threw down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple and went out and hanged himself. This is the only gospel that cites the amount (Mt. 26:14-16) as the other two synoptic gospels only say he was paid a sum of money (Mk. 14:10-11; Lk. 22:1-6) and John does not mention any payment (Jn. 13:21-30). Matthew says the priests took the money and bought the potter's field to bury strangers and it came to be called the Field of Blood (Mt. 27:1-10). This contradicts the only other account of Judas' death, depicted in the book of Acts. It says Judas purchased a field with his wages of iniquity and fell headlong and burst open his inners and his entrails gushed out (Acts 1:16-20). Much of Matthew's account pretty much follows Mark's lead but here are some minor deviations. It alone includes the somewhat famous verses where Pilate washed his hands before the crowd of angry Jews and said, "*I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.*" And all the people answered and said, "*His blood be on us and on our children*" (Mt. 27:24-25). It certainly makes for a dramatic scene but it is highly unlikely the crowd would say something like that spontaneously and in unison. It sounds more like something that was rehearsed and this is not suggested in the text. The wine that was offered to Jesus just before being crucified was *sour & mixed with gall* (not myrrh) *and he tasted it* but would not drink it (Mt. 27:34; Mk. 15:23). The sign's inscription is also a little different and reads "*THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS*" (Mt. 27:37). Jesus is reviled by on lookers but *also by the robbers who were crucified with him* (Mt. 27:38-44).

Then there are some *major deviations* that are unique to Matthew's account. After Jesus' death not only was the veil of the temple torn in two but the earth also quaked and rocks were split. Then he claims graves were opened and many bodies of the saints were raised and after His resurrection they appeared to people in Jerusalem (Mt. 27:51-53). Then it says the next day following the Day of Preparation the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate. They warned he had said after three days he would rise and were concerned that his body might be stolen. Pilate allowed them to seal the tomb and placed a guard (Mt. 27:62-66).

After the Sabbath Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrived *but there isn't any mentioned of them bringing spices or oils*. Then there was a *second earthquake* and the angel of the Lord rolled back the stone and sat on it. The guards were terrified and became paralyzed or like dead men. The angel told the ladies Jesus has risen and is going before you into Galilee. They ran off to tell the others. Jesus appears to them en-route and said they would see him in Galilee. Meanwhile the priests bribed the guards telling them to say the disciples had stolen the body while they slept. The eleven disciples *went to Galilee* and encountered Jesus on a mountain and he gave them their commission which includes going to different nations and baptizing people in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28). *This is a very different part of the story!*

Luke's Account

After Jesus was betrayed by Judas with a kiss and arrested by Jewish high priests, captains of the temple, and the elders he was mocked, blind folded and beaten and asked, "*Who was it that struck you?*" (Lk. 22:47-53; 63-65). All three synoptic gospels contain similar accounts about Jesus being abused after he was arrested by the Jewish leaders. He is also abused by the Roman soldiers but as we saw earlier only Luke contains the account of abuse by Herod's men and does not include any such event by the Romans. Recall that Luke claims Herod's men put a gorgeous robe on him and mistreated him and sent him back to Pilate (Lk. 23:6-12). It replaces the story about Pilate's soldiers doing much the same *but they also added the crown of thorns*.

The accusations against Jesus in Luke's account are the most elaborate. The chief priests told Pilate Jesus perverted the nation, forbid people to pay Caesar's taxes and claimed to be Christ, a King. They said he also stirred up people beginning in Galilee and throughout Judea (Lk. 23:1-5). The other gospels only implicate he had claimed to be Christ or the Son of God and he admits as much to Pilate.

Luke also contains other unique features. After Jesus was given the death sentence and was walking to "Calvary" (*this is a Latin term, the other gospels use the Greek term "Golgotha"*) Jesus spoke to the crowd (Lk. 23:28-31) and his little speech is not mentioned in the other gospels. Luke claims the sign above him on the cross was written in three languages *Greek, Latin and Hebrew*. The inscription is also slightly different: *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS*. Also while on their crosses *both robbers do not blaspheme Jesus* as depicted in Matthew (Mt. 27:38-44) but one says, in part, *"Lord remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."* Jesus' replies, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise"* (Lk. 23:39-43).

At the sixth to the ninth hour the Sun was darkened and the veil of the temple is also said to have torn in two *but this occurs before Jesus died* (Lk. 23:44-46). Luke depicts a group of women arrived at the tomb on the first day of the week with spices they had prepared. The stone had been rolled away and they went in but could not find the body and two men dressed in shining garments stood by and told them Jesus wasn't here. He had risen as he had foretold while they were still in Galilee. *This isn't the same story as in Matthew where it was the Angel of the Lord who sat on the stone outside the tomb when he encountered the two ladies named Mary (Mt. 28). Nor is it the same as the angel in Mark's account whom they encountered inside the tomb (Mk. 16:4-8).* Luke goes on to say, the group of ladies went and told the eleven and all the rest but they did not believe it.

After Peter heard them he ran to the tomb and saw the linen cloths and marveled. Luke then gives the details about the two disciples travelling to a nearby village called Emmaus and of their encounter with the resurrected Jesus. This means the two unnamed disciples were first to see Jesus *but Mark says Mary Magdalene was first (Mk. 16:9-13). Matthew claims it was the two ladies named Mary and they even held Jesus by his feet (Mt. 28:9-10).* After Jesus vanished in the midst of the two disciples they returned to Jerusalem to tell the others. They made a peculiar statement as at least one of them said, *"The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"* Perhaps the implication is one of the two was Simon Peter since he is not specifically cited as having had an earlier post mortem experience. In any case while they spoke, Jesus appeared in their midst and then spoke and ate with them. He also led them out as far as Bethany and was carried up into heaven (Lk. 24:12-53). All of this occurred within the environs of Jerusalem and it is very different, contradictory and unique.

John's Account

John's account of the details is also very different. When Judas betrays Jesus he does not identify him by kissing him. Instead Jesus asks the group of troops, *"Whom are you seeking?"* They answered, *"Jesus of Nazareth."* Jesus said, *"I am He"* and the troops drew back and fell down. This is apparently a display of some sort of power. Peter drew his sword and cut off Malchus' ear. He was the servant of the high priest and was with the troops. Jesus ordered Peter to sheath his sword, and he spoke but was bound and arrested (Jh. 18:1-14). The part about cutting off the ear is also included in Matthew but the swordsman is not named. Matthew says after Jesus spoke all of his disciples forsook him and fled. You would think the one who wounded Malchus would have also been arrested but perhaps he ran quickly. (Mt. 26:51-56). John only scantily covered Jesus' interrogation by individuals within the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court. The synoptic gospels have Jesus admitting to be the Son of God and/or the Christ (Mt.

26:63-64; Mk. 14:61-62; Lk. 22:66-70). This tells us the two titles were synonymous in the first century Jewish cultural context but we don't see this in John's gospel. In Mathew's account Jesus went onto say *"hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Mt. 26:57- 68). Mark's account basically agrees and both include the high priest tore his clothes after hearing Jesus' blasphemy (Mt. 26:65; Mk. 14:53-65). We do not see the tearing of clothes in either John or Luke's account. Luke also does not include Jesus' phrase *"and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Lk. 22:66-71) and John does not mention any of it.

In John during the interrogation Jesus is merely questioned about his disciples and doctrine. Jesus replies everything he had said he did so openly in the synagogues and the temple. This alone was supposedly reason enough for Annas, the one in charge, to have sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. However nothing is said of this second encounter and it seems to have been an invented step during the hurried evening's events. The story line skips to Caiaphas sending Jesus to the Roman Praetorium during the early morning hours (Jn. 18:19-28). This directly contradicts Matthew's account that says those who arrested Jesus led him directly to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders were already assembled (Mt. 26:57). Caiaphas isn't specifically mentioned in Mark's story as it only uses the term *"high priest"* but the next morning the leaders decided to send Jesus to Pilate (Mk. 15:1). Luke says Jesus' condemning comment: *"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" was made after it was day*. Then a whole multitude of them led him away to Pilate (Lk. 22:66 - 23:1). The similar comment in Mark was made during the evening (Mk. 14:61- 15:1) and Matthew follows suite (Mt. 26:26:63 – 26:1). So, we have seen another batch of contradictions.

When Pilate questioned Jesus, two of the synoptics say he remained so silent that the governor marveled (Mt. 27:11-14; Mk. 15:1-5). Even in Luke Jesus only uttered a single sentence (Lk. 23:3). However in John we see a different story where Jesus engages Pilate in conversation (Jn. 18:34, 36-37; 19:11). There are other unique details. Jesus is whipped before he is dressed with a purple robe and the crown of thorns and then mocked and struck by the soldiers. He is paraded in front of the hostile Jewish crowd. After the Jews said, *"whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar"* Pilate had Jesus brought out to the area called "The Pavement" and the governor took his place on the judgment seat. Jesus is then depicted as *carrying his own cross to Golgotha*. The sign above him on the cross is also slightly different but agrees with Luke in that it was written in Hebrew, Greek & Latin. It reads *JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*. So, we have four versions of what the sign said; a slightly different one in each gospel. The other two who were also crucified are mentioned but there is not any recorded conversation amongst them. Jesus dies but without any natural disasters, darkness or mention of the temple's veil tearing or special signs or events of any kind. It seems like quite a significant omission. After Jesus' death John alone says the corpse was pierced by a soldier's spear (Jh. 19:32-37).

There are also other details in John not seen in the other gospels. Mary Magdalene is depicted as having arrived *alone* early in the morning at the tomb, the stone had been removed from the entrance and the body was gone. There isn't any mention of angels at this point. She ran and told Simon Peter and apparently John as the disciple Jesus loved and they all ran to the tomb. John arrived firstly and found it empty. Mary remained at the tomb alone and encountered two angels and then Jesus whom she initially thought was the gardener. When she realized it was Jesus she exclaimed *"Rabboni."* Jesus cautioned her to not cling to him as he had not ascended to My Father. This differs from the account in Matthew as the two ladies named Mary are depicted as actually holding onto his feet and worshipping him on the first encounter (Mt. 28:9-10). After Mary Magdalene told the disciples the Lord had risen, that same evening he appeared to them although the doors were locked. At this time Jesus breathed on them and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they*

are retained" (Jh. 20:19-23). This contradicts the account in Acts when the Holy Spirit only firstly comes to them on the Day of Pentecost, after Jesus had ascended into heaven (Acts 1:8-11; 2:1-3).

John also solely contains the account of doubting Thomas. He was told of the early visitation but refused to believe unless he could put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands and his hand in his side wound. Eight days later when the doors were shut Jesus appeared again when Thomas was there. He told Thomas to touch his wounds but it is not stated whether Thomas actually did touch him; but he believed. The 20th chapter ends with a great conclusion to the gospel: "but these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you may have life in His name" (Jh. 20:31). As any writer knows it would be hard to improve on that conclusion.

Chapter 21 reads almost like an after thought or a latter addition. It speaks of a visitation of Jesus at the Sea of Tiberius in Galilee. The disciples are fishing and Jesus appears on the shore and tells them to cast their net to the right side. They dragged in one hundred and fifty one large fish (Jn. 21: 1-11). When they came ashore a fire was burning and some fish were cooking along with some bread. Jesus gave the prepared food to them. It states that this is the third time he had appeared to the disciples since he was raised from the dead. So let's count. The first appearance was when Jesus appeared on the first day of the week to Mary Magdalene but this one is discounted perhaps since Mary was not an official disciple and they were male chauvinists. So the first visitation to the disciples occurred after Mary told the disciples she had seen the Lord. The eleven were assembled behind closed doors and Jesus appeared in their midst. The second time was when Thomas was present eight days later. This poses a problem since Thomas was supposedly one of the original twelve (Mt. 10:1-4) and the eleven (the original twelve minus Judas Iscariot) were supposed to be present during the first visitation! It shows the author did not think this through very clearly. In any case the third time in John's accounting is the one around the Sea of Tiberius (Jn. 21:14).

If we read Matthew, Jesus firstly appeared to the two ladies named Mary (Mt. 28:9-10). The second stated incident is on a mountain in Galilee where the eleven disciples encountered Jesus (Mt. 28:16-20). So even if we count the mountain visitation as the first in John's reckoning we have at least one more visitation but it doesn't add into John's count of three. This is due to the completely different locations cited in both accounts i.e. one is on a mountain the other is by the sea.

When we read Mark, Jesus firstly appear to Mary Magdalene and then to the two as they walked in the country. The third time he appeared to the eleven as they sat at their table and this has to be at least around Jerusalem. Since the timing is not specific it could agree with John's counting; it could be counted as the first of John's three counts. However there is a problem. The visitation to "the two" in Mark is the same as "the two" in Luke, but there is a problem. Mark does not give us any timing for his mention of the visitation to the two nor to his first visitation to the eleven. We are merely told these occurred in step but after Mary Magdalene saw Jesus (Mk. 16:9-14).

Luke's account throws off or differs from Mark's timing and his other details. In his account neither Mary Magdalene nor Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned as encountering the risen Jesus! The first stated visitation relates to when two disciples traveled on the road to Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. His details allow us to reckon a general timing for this event and therefore also the first visitation to the eleven. When the two on the road encountered the stranger it says it was still the first day of the week. After they arrived and as the evening's meal began they realized who he was and Jesus vanished. They left to go back to Jerusalem to tell the others in the same hour but when they arrived it had to have been during the evening of the next day i.e.

Jewish reckoning. While they were telling the disciples, Jesus appeared to “the eleven” for the first time (Lk. 24:28-53). So the timing of the visitation to the eleven in Luke is not the same as the first one in John. In the later account it is still the first day of the week (Jh. 20:19) and in the former it is on the second day. This also puts Mark’s supposed first visitation to the disciples in similar timing jeopardy with John’s account since it occurred after the visitation to the two unnamed disciples (Mk. 16:12-20). So Mark’s first visitation account to the eleven had to have occurred either on the second day of the week or later. There really isn’t any support in the other gospels for how John counted three visitations to the disciples. John is once again, a lone wolf. His count of three visitations only applies within his own document.

Peter’s Denials and the Rooster’s Crow

I have held back the discussion about well known story of Peter denying he was with Jesus and the others as it further illustrates differences and contradictions in all four gospels. In Mark’s gospel at the end of the Lord’s Supper Jesus predicts that very night all of the disciples would stumble. Peter claimed even if the others do, he will not. Jesus replied, *“Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times”* (Mk. 14:27-31). When Jesus was about to be arrested by the Jewish troops all the disciples fled. However Peter followed from behind and made it into the courtyard of the high priest. One of the servant girls saw Peter warming himself by a fire and she accused him of having been with Jesus. Peter denied it and shortly the rooster crowed. Then the *same* servant girl saw him again and told the others who stood by that he was one of them. Peter again denied it. A little later those who were around the fire with Peter said he must be one of them because of his Galilean accent. This time Peter began to curse and swore he didn’t know the man. Then *the rooster crowed the second time* (Mk. 14:66-72).

Matthew’s story differs. Jesus predicts that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed (Mt. 26:31-35). The reference to the rooster crowing *twice* is gone. The servant girl still makes the first accusation to Peter *but another girl makes the second one*. The third accusation is the same as Mark’s as it comes from those around the fire and they cite his Galilean speech as evidence. Peter still denies each accusation and after the third, the rooster crowed. Mark and Matthew cannot both be right about how many times the rooster crowed and it is clearly contradictory.

Luke’s story also takes a turn. It is basically the same as Matthew’s account only he *strangely claims Jesus was in the courtyard and after the rooster crowed, he turned and looked at Peter. Then he remembered Jesus’ prediction and Peter went out and wept bitterly* (Lk. 22:54-62). I find this account very hard to believe. Jesus was most probably taken inside the compound, under heavy guard and was being interrogated and abused.

John’s account is also unique. Jesus again predicts the rooster will crow after three denials (Jn. 18:15-18). Only Peter is with an unnamed disciple who knew the high priest and they followed the troops who had arrested Jesus. *This disciple used his influence to get Peter into the courtyard*. This makes sense as it is hard to imagine that just anyone could walk onto the property without passing a guard. A servant girl is mentioned as being in charge of the door and she is first to make an accusation against Peter. The *second* accusation is made by *servants and officers by the fire* in the courtyard but *the other gospels say individuals around the fire made the third accusation*. John mentions another servant who was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. This servant made the third accusation by suggesting Peter had been in the garden with Jesus. After Peter’s third denial the rooster crowed (Jn. 18:15-18). We can see John’s story is most certainly very different and also contradictory when compared to the other gospel accounts.

I Corinthians & Paul's List

As I indicated earlier Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is probably the first written reference to the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament. Paul writes:

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received 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, and He was seen by *Cephas*, then by the *twelve*. After that He was seen by *over five hundred brethren* at once, of whom the present part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that he was seen by *James*, then by *all the apostles*. Then *last of all He was seen by me* also, as by one born out of due time (I Cor. 15:3-8).

The problems begin when we compare this to the gospels. We encounter contradictions just like we have seen when we compared the gospels to each other. Paul is listing people who saw Jesus in a historic or timely order. Cephas or Peter was not the first to see Jesus in Mark's gospel. His listing of visitations says *Mary Magdalene* was first, then *the two* in another form as they walked into the country and afterward to *the eleven* as they sat at the table (Mk. 16:9-14). Further the second in Paul's list is the twelve and here we have to pause. The original twelve included the traitor Judas but recall he hanged himself or fell and his entrails gushed out depending on whether you believe Matthew or the writer of Acts. Acts tells us that one named Matthias was chosen by lot to replace Judas; but this is after Jesus appeared to the disciples during forty days and had ascended to heaven (Act 1:3, 9-11, 15-26). So we don't have twelve apostles again until this point and there have already been other visitations. It just does not jive. I could go through the other three gospels but we have already done so. They do not say anything about Jesus' appearance to the group of over five hundred, Paul's mention of James seeing him or of Paul's later vision. Each gospel and I Corinthians all tell different stories. Luke is the closest account where we might deduce Peter was one of two whom Jesus firstly visited on the road to Emmaus. Even here we cannot say he secondly appeared to the *twelve* as per the problems we just discussed.

Also there are other discrepancies in accounts about what the resurrected Jesus did. Luke has Jesus ascending into heaven at Bethany (Lk. 24:50-53) and this differs in timing compared to the ascension mentioned in Acts. The Bethany ascension occurred on the second day after the resurrection when the two unnamed disciples returned to Jerusalem. The Acts ascension occurred after a forty day period of visitations and it happened in Jerusalem; since Jesus tells them not to depart from the city but to wait for the Holy Spirit. In both stories prior to the ascension Jesus gave the disciples the same instructions to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). This part of the story is further complicated by the account of Jesus giving the disciples the Holy Spirit. After Jesus had appeared to the two ladies named Mary, he appeared to presumably *ten disciples* (all but Thomas and Judas left the group or was already dead) in their locked residence. It was still the first day after the resurrection. Jesus breathed on them and said "*Receive the Holy Spirit*" (Jh. 20:19-23). Again these are different stories.

The Acts of the Apostles

There is little doubt that the writer of Acts was one of Paul's close associates. Traditionally it is attributed to Luke but it could have been Timothy or some other follower. The author tells the story of Paul's vision three times and he emerges as the protagonist in the later part of the book. The book primarily becomes an account of Paul's life from the time he persecuted Christians, was converted after his vision and his struggles during his travels and ministry up and until his detention in Rome. After this Paul went from being confined but was free to preach, to being imprisoned and expecting the worse as is expressed in some of his other letters. The story ends

without a conclusion but it is commonly thought he perished in the Nero's persecution around 65 AD.

The most interesting event for our purpose is the writer's portrayal of Paul's vision. We will start with his first version. Saul was an active persecutor of the new Jewish sect who claimed that Jesus was the messiah and they had persuaded the Romans to execute him. He was present and encouraged those who stoned Stephen to death. Saul had entered into the homes of the Jewish Christians and had men and women dragged off and put into prison. He even went to the high priest and obtained letters to the synagogues of Damascus if others there be found they would be arrested, bound and brought to Jerusalem. When he got near Damascus he saw a light from heaven and fell to the ground. A voice said to him, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" Paul asked, "*Who are you, Lord?*" "*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads*" Paul was shocked and he heard, "*Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.*" (Acts: 9:1-6).

The men who were with him were speechless and they had heard a voice but did not see anyone. Saul was blinded and had to be led by hand for three days and he did not eat or drink. There was a Christian named Ananias in Damascus who also had a vision but it was about Saul of Tarsus whom they all feared and was instructed to serve him. He found him and placed his hands on him so he would receive the Holy Spirit and regain his sight. Saul could see and was baptized. He spent some days with the Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:1-19).

What did Saul really see? It seems to have been a vision but in this version of the story those who were with him *didn't see it but heard something*. It is also clear that Saul was disturbed by what he was doing. What you have to realize is he was not only a persecutor but participated in the murder of Stephen and perhaps others. He could have been what we now call a serial murderer. It was not legal for Jews to execute anyone, never mind stoning people to death who did not even have a hearing or trial. Recall, the Jewish leaders handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate as they did not dare murder such a popular personality. Paul's guilt is also implicated in statement attributed to Jesus in the vision, "*It is hard for you to kick against the goads*" (Acts 9:5). A goad is a stick with barbs on the end that animal herders used to control the animals. It is as if to say, Saul was hurting himself in the direction he was going. I think the bravery and faith of his victims must have left a lasting impression on him. The imagery also suggests Saul was at least capable of feeling empathy for his victims. If he didn't one could conclude he was a sociopath; but I do not think that was the case.

It is interesting to the note that Saul's other name Paul, was firstly revealed in the account of him preaching at Cyprus (Acts 13:9) and hereafter he is always referred to as Paul. Perhaps it was intended to signify his conversion; as if the old persecutor Saul gave way to the new Christian preacher Paul. It seems to have occurred after having passed a time of proving himself to the church. Even in his letters he is only known as Paul. Such identity changes are not uncommon amongst individuals who have made such dramatic about turns in life.

The second telling of Saul's vision in Acts is different. In this account Paul was arrested in Jerusalem after someone made the accusation, "*this is the man who teaches men everywhere against the law and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place*" (Acts 21:28). The accusation was partially false but he was saved from the murderous mob by the commander of the Roman garrison and his troops. Later on the same day, Paul was allowed to speak to the Jews in Hebrew and gave an account of his vision. It is much the same as the first telling but it claims *those who were with him, indeed saw the light but did not hear the voice* (Acts 22:9). This is a reversal from the first account that claims they saw nothing but heard something (Acts 9:7). Paul's telling also includes other details that are not present in

the first account as can be seen from a comparison of the conversation he had with the Jesus of his vision.

Finally there is the third and last telling of the same story. This time it was part of Paul's defense before King Agrippa in Caesarea and he adds new details. He said he saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun shining around him and those who were with him. After he they had *all fallen* he heard in *the Hebrew language* the voice of Jesus in the vision ([Acts 26:19](#)). It is the most detailed of all three accounts ([Acts 26:14-18](#)). Note that in addition to the slight differences in what Jesus of the vision said (you can compare them yourself) this account also claims *all of them literally fell to the ground*.

I wondered further about why Paul had his experience and will share my theory. The imagery of Paul kicking against the goads is told in two of the accounts ([Acts 9:5](#); [26:14](#)) and we discussed the imagery earlier. I think Paul was in a psychological double bind. On the one hand he probably felt he could not simply stop the persecution, after all he had his permission letter from the high priest and was expected to complete his mission. On the other, he felt he couldn't continue doing evil. He clearly needed a way out but couldn't make a move; hence his vision and subsequent blindness. Whatever the men with him experienced is uncertain as the accounts contradict and I don't think we can rely too much on it. The bottom line is that only Paul was blinded and needed to be led by hand to Damascus.

In any case, we have three different accounts in Acts of Paul's vision. In I Corinthians, Paul relates his vision as the last, but on par with the other Jesus visitations he lists. We also have differing accounts of Jesus' last days and of his post mortem appearances in the four gospels and the account of the visitations in the Acts. So what can we make of all of this?

Story Drifting About the Resurrection

It should be clear by now the stories about the resurrection changed over time and in more than one direction. I call this story drifting as any orally transmitted tale tends to change over numerous retellings. Several versions can exist and when a writer decides to put it to ink she/he might have to choose details amongst different versions. Paul's scanty account was the earliest and his own experience is the most elusive and he does not deal with issues like the disappearance of Jesus' corpse. Nor does he add anything that shows Jesus' new body could be touched, appeared inside locked quarters, ate food and suddenly disappeared or dematerialized. All of these features of the story were added to later accounts.

We do not know anything about the other visitations Paul listed in I Corinthians. The one that deserves some attention is the mention of Jesus appearing to a group of over five hundred disciples. The problem is Paul does not provide any details. We are left wondering or looking at some possible more detailed modern accounts of groups of people claiming to have seen unusual things. On October 12, 1917 the Miracle of the Sun near Fatima, Portugal occurred as thousands of people witnessed strange signs in the sky. The people had gathered because three young shepherd children had predicted that at high noon the Blessed Virgin Mary would appear in a field or give a sign in an area of Fatima called Cova da Iria.

According to many witnesses, after a rainfall, the dark clouds broke and the sun appeared as an opaque, spinning disc in the sky. It was said to be significantly duller than normal, and to cast multicolored lights across the landscape including areas within darker shadows but also onto the people and the surrounding clouds. The sun was then said to have careened towards the earth in a zigzag pattern, frightening the crowd. Many shocked people had thought it was a sign of the

end of the world. Witnesses also reported their wet clothes and the muddy ground became *"suddenly and completely dry."*

Two problems are: prolonged staring at the sun can cause visual distortions and there are differing accounts. ^[14] However it is difficult to believe all 30,000 plus people present spent very much time staring at the sun. No doubt some did but the majority is unlikely. Much depends on the amount of time individuals stared upwards. Some people must have shouted out what they were seeing and some of their neighbors were influenced. Some pockets or areas of people were probably blinded by staring too long, and others saw things, some others saw very different things etc. In any case the story persists.

Many people have also reportedly seen UFO's. Shirley MacLaine and others claim there are some hot spots in South America for UFO sightings. It is said at these places UFO sightings are more likely. However groups of people in many places around the world have reportedly seen such things. There are many different points of view related to UFO sightings. It goes from allegations of governments covering up and keeping physical and detection evidence from the populace to falsified videos including props made to look like flying saucers and even dummies posed as dead ET's. In some cases the computer age has put the validity of video evidence into jeopardy. In any case we do not have any details of Paul's mention of over five hundred believers seeing Jesus; it could have been anything, including invented and/or exaggerated and circulating stories. Paul certainly does not claim he was among them.

The Physicality Problem

The claim for the resurrection of Jesus is that he was physically resurrected and therefore his body had disappeared from the tomb. As we have seen Paul's encounter with the deity was a vision ([Acts 26:19](#)). Mark the earliest gospel contains the account of the missing corpse but nothing else about how the resurrected Jesus interacted physically with things in the environment or with people. Jesus only speaks to and instructs his disciples but nothing else is claimed. There is little doubt that naysayers even in their day would claim all they saw were ghostly apparitions.

However the account of the missing body has to be dealt with. One could say the story was all made up and perhaps it was; but this is unlikely since those in the inner circle of the deception had to have colluded with several others and they had to have deluded others in the group. One could also say the disciples stole the body away in an attempt to fool others. However this is unlikely since some of them were willing to die for what they believed. This leaves the most likely physical explanation. The gospels claim that after the entombment of the body everyone went home and observed the Sabbath. This would have given ample time for Roman tricksters, non-Jews or irreverent ones to have pulled off a prank. They could have stolen the body, deluded everyone and of course they wouldn't speak a word for fear of reprisal.

You might think this is farfetched but even in modern times some people have gone out in the night and worked long hours in grain fields to create crop circles. They were not paid, and their only purpose was to fool others. Some years later they did come forward with an admission and



even revealed their technique. Their designs were close in appearance to other unaccounted for crop circles that they admitted they did not create. My point is not to get into the specifics of the crop circle debate but rather to illustrate there is a tendency within some people to pull pranks just to fool, confuse and delude others. Some of them enjoy drinking some brews and laughing and bragging amongst themselves of how they duped the public and the media! ^[15]

The possibility of stealing the body is taken up in Matthew's account. The next day the Jewish elders went to Pilate and got permission to seal the tomb and to have guards put into place for fear the body would be stolen. It had to have been a Sabbath since it was the day after the day of Preparation. It is unlikely to have been early in the morning as one does not usually knock on the governor's door during the ungodly early morning hours. It does show that Jesus' prediction about him rising after three days was known by outsiders. Nothing is mentioned about the Jews rolling the stone and going inside to check whether the body was still there. All that is written, is they sealed the stone and left after leaving the guards in place (Mt. 27:62-65). Mathew's story does not cover all of the loop holes. It still leaves ample time for tricksters to have had already taken the body during the previous evening hours or even in the morning. In any case it does show that Matthew was concerned about the stolen body theory and tried to cover the bases. The fact is, he is the only one who mentions it and this weakens the case. It looks much like a later day invention.

Matthew only makes one mention of Jesus' resurrected body displaying a physical effect. It is the account of the two Mary's holding him by the feet on the first visitation mentioned (Mt. 28:9-10). Luke's gospel includes different incidents. Recall Jesus is depicted as a disguised man who travelled with the two unnamed disciples to Emmaus. Later at dinner he handles bread, blessed it and broke it, just before he vanished. Later when back in Jerusalem as the two were telling the disciples Jesus made his second appearance. They thought they had seen a spirit but Jesus showed them his hands and feet; presumably he still had his wounds. He then offered to let them handle him saying a spirit does not have flesh and bones. It doesn't say they touched him but he ate a piece of broiled fish and some honey comb as they watched (Lk. 24:28-43). It sure reads as if the writer is trying to discount common ghost sighting stories. John's gospel includes the story of doubting Thomas that we went over earlier. Also in the last chapter Jesus handles fish and bread that were previously cooked and gives it to the disciples (Jn. 21:13). In Acts it is said that during a period of forty days he appeared to the disciples showing them many infallible proofs; but it is not specific. Of what is told, Jesus only speaks to them but there isn't any mention of his physicality before he ascends into heaven (Acts 1:1-8).

Conclusion

There are clear signs of story drifting about the resurrection from the earliest stories to the later. Paul's account of his vision is the earliest story that we have any details about. He equated his vision on par with Jesus' visitations to others. There isn't any mention of Jesus' physicality. I think it is clear that naysayers most probably were saying the early Christians were seeing ghosts or perhaps hallucinating. Mark's account is the earliest gospel and it merely presents the story of the missing body but nothing about the physicality of Jesus' new body. In Luke we see blends of a ghostly apparition and a physical being. He handles food but vanishes or disappears. Later he appears and shows his hands and feet. He eats food in the disciple's presence. In Matthew we see a gospel writer dealing with the stolen corpse theory and no doubt it was an issue in his day. He also mentions the two Mary's held Jesus by the feet. And in John's account, Jesus appeared like a ghost to the disciples within the locked quarters of their residence. Yet he also appears to be physical and shows off his wounds and later offered to let Thomas touch him. In the last visitation he also handles food on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias.

One wonders why the blend of ghostly qualities with that of flesh and blood? Perhaps the mere stating that people saw Jesus' spirit was not special enough as such sightings have been reported over the ages. Also if as I suggest, some hoaxers stole the body; it would have fanned the flames of a belief in a physical resurrection. One must recall the early Christians were Jews who believed in the resurrection on the final day and so an element of this expectation probably

weeded its way into the story line. Matthew made the effort to solely include his account of the sightings of the resurrected saints after Jesus' resurrection but no details are given (Mt. 27:51-53). Were they clearly flesh and blood individuals who lived out a second life? Were they ghostly apparitions? Perhaps the story was entirely fictional invented by Matthew as he alone includes this statement. It is unlikely that the others would have omitted such astonishing events.

However the other problem is physical bodies do not normally appear and disappear. This strange and imaginative phenomenon has only recently appeared in modern science fiction. The writers penned in transporter-like machines into their stories such as in the popular Star Trek series. I think the resurrected Jesus stories started off as being visions or tales of ghost sightings and it was convincing enough. Later after much negative criticism, the stories drifted into accounts of Jesus being depicted as someone who was a flesh and blood being and whom also appeared and disappeared. He seemingly could pass through walls, yet eat food, could be touched and showed off his wounds. Even the later day fictional flesh and blood Count Dracula could not equal these feats. Why would a supernatural being such as the resurrected Jesus bother to portray himself in this fashion? Surely, if he is real, he is not still suffering from his wounds. The stories seem to have picked up details in order to remain convincing as the decades ensued.

Some Christian apologists even claim the resurrection of Jesus is a proof that god exists. William Lane Craig of Biola University is a Christian philosopher/apologist who often debates other academics about issues such as god's existence. To be an apologist in this context means to be one who rationally argues for and defends the faith. He used the resurrection of Jesus as one of his proofs of god's existence in the course of a debate with noted atheist Christopher Hitchens in 2009 at Biola University.

(I wrote an essay on this debate and you can download it from my website <http://antspub.com> Click on any Downloads button on the top of any page and you can freely download the essay: "Comments on a Debate: Does God Exist?").

Craig raised the issue of the missing corpse and how unlikely it would be if the disciples stole the body as some later were also willing to die for their beliefs. He incorrectly stated Jesus even appeared to non believers. The New Testament does not say anyone other than believers had a visitation experience. He even quoted N.T. Wright the eminent New Testament scholar. He claims that there was not a contemporary Jewish expectation for anyone to be resurrected prior to the Day of Judgment. Not even a dead Messiah. The implication is Jesus' resurrection was totally unexpected and therefore its citing in the New Testament makes it all the more believable. However, they both failed to consider that Jesus clearly taught his disciples that he would be resurrected; so his followers did have an expectation and they were the ones who saw him in post mortem appearances (Lk. 24:1-8).

As I said earlier I think the corpse was stolen by outsiders, perhaps Roman hoaxers. We do not know specifically when or where the crucifixion and other alleged events occurred and nor is there a single stitch of physical evidence. People can believe anything they like but if the issue is to prove beyond a reasonable doubt or even due to the preponderance of the evidence then the case for the resurrection clearly fails. Also you cannot use an unproven proposition to prove another one. The resurrection has not been proven and is not proof of god's existence or of anything else. The contradictory New Testament record does not make a reliable case. If anything it clearly proves the story drifted over the decades to its latest form of the physical resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Many people believe it without question to this very day. They have a right to their beliefs but others do not have to agree. Within our beloved democracies, we all have the freedom to communicate!

Endnotes

[¹] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shroud_of_Turin#cite_note-ncbi.nlm.nih.gov-12 Shroud of Turin

[²] http://www.world-mysteries.com/sar_2.htm See the essay "Bloodstains".

[³] One is a short reference by 1st century Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus to Christians as having been falsely accused by Nero of having starting the Great Fire of Rome. He also mentions their leader "Christus" who had earlier been crucified by Pontius Pilate. It is found in the Book 15 chapter 44 of his Annals. Its authenticity has been challenged by some scholars but accepted by others. Jesus is mentioned by Josephus the Jewish historian in his Antiquities in two different sections. Another reference to Christians is made by a Pliny the Younger around 112 AD. He was corresponding with the Emperor Trajan and a provincial governor. He wanted advice since Christians refused to worship the emperor but instead worshipped "Christus."

[⁴] <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Crucifixion>

[⁵] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels

[⁶] We do not have anything direct on the early patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac & Jacob etc. There isn't a single archeological confirmation of the Israelites having been slaves in Egypt; nothing supports the exodus and Joshua's conquest of the Holy Land. Archeology only partially confirms a lineage stemming from the House of David but many questions remain unanswered.

[⁷] Humphreys, Collin (2011). The Mystery of the Last Supper: Reconstructing the Final Days of Jesus. NY, New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 61–79.

[⁸] "Census of Quirinius" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quirinius_Census

[⁹] "Joseph of Arimathea," <http://www.answers.com/topic/joseph-of-arimathea>

[¹⁰] "Calvary" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvary>

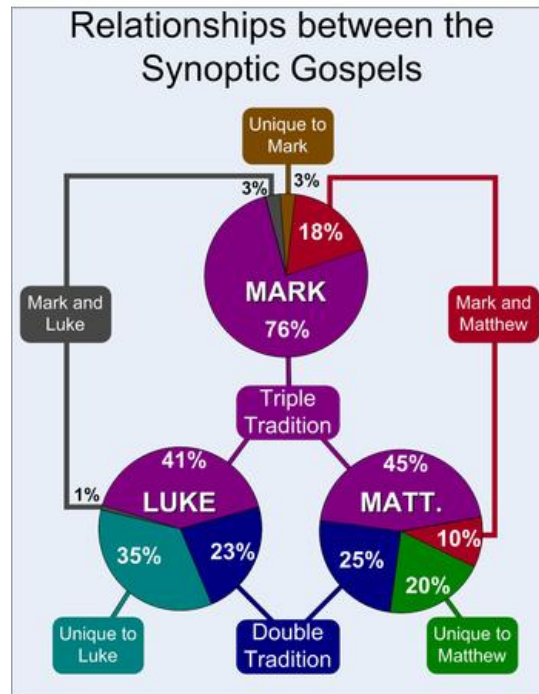
[¹¹] <http://talpiottomb.com/index.html>

[¹²] http://www.wivenhoe.gov.uk/people/joan_taylor.htm

[¹³] "Church of the Holy Sepulchre" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre

[¹⁴] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Miracle_of_the_Sun

[¹⁵] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crop_circle



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels



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