

Synchronizing the Resurrection Appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ – The “Problem” (Part 1)

At first when compared side-by-side, the accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus *seem* contradictory. This has encouraged New Atheists, like Dan Barker, to use these “contradictions” to vociferously attack and undermine Christianity as being unreliable and to gain new atheistic disciples in an attempt to remove God and Christianity from American culture. Dan Barker is no dummy. He is a member of the Prometheus Society, a very exclusive *very* high-IQ club with less than one hundred members. This club is more restrictive than even Mensa International—Mensa entry is achievable by 1 in 50. According to Prometheus website, “Membership in the society is open to anyone who has received a score on an accepted IQ test that is equal to or greater than that received by the highest 1 in 30,000 of the general population.”

Dan Barker has offered a challenge to all Christians to simply provide him with an account of the resurrection appearances. Here are his conditions (for his complete listing of his “discrepancies,” see <http://www.ffrf.org/legacy/books/lfif/?t=stone>).

I HAVE AN EASTER challenge for Christians. My challenge is simply this: tell me what happened on Easter. I am not asking for proof. My straightforward request is merely that Christians tell me exactly what happened on the day that their most important doctrine was born.

Believers should eagerly take up this challenge, since without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. Paul wrote, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." (I Corinthians 15:14-15)

The conditions of the challenge are simple and reasonable. In each of the four Gospels, begin at Easter morning and read to the end of the book: Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20-21. Also read Acts 1:3-12 and Paul's tiny version of the story in I Corinthians 15:3-8. These 165 verses can be read in a few moments. Then, without omitting a single detail from these separate accounts, write a simple, chronological narrative of the events between the resurrection and the ascension: what happened first, second, and so on; who said what, when; and where these things happened.

Since the gospels do not always give precise times of day, it is permissible to make educated guesses. The narrative does not have to pretend to present a perfect picture--it only needs to give at least one plausible account of all of the facts. Additional explanation

of the narrative may be set apart in parentheses. *The important condition to the challenge, however, is that not one single biblical detail be omitted.* Fair enough?

I have tried this challenge myself. I failed. An Assembly of God minister whom I was debating a couple of years ago on a Florida radio show loudly proclaimed over the air that he would send me the narrative in a few days. I am still waiting. After my debate at the University of Wisconsin, "Jesus of Nazareth: Messiah or Myth," a Lutheran graduate student told me he accepted the challenge and would be contacting me in about a week. I have never heard from him. Both of these people, and others, agreed that the request was reasonable and crucial. Maybe they are slow readers.

In this series we will examine the resurrection narratives in detail. Although there are more than one solution to this puzzle, I will provide the solution that meets Barker's rules. Understanding the resurrection narrative will not only enable us to appreciate the unique way the narratives are put together, they will enable us to shut the mouths of atheists and critics of the Bible. Besides, there is nothing like watching the face of some young atheist confounded when he is confronted with the Truth he cannot refute. This is far better than for a believer to be confounded and weakened by the atheist.

My goal in this series is to give every believer the ability to open His Bible and show anyone just how naturally and perfectly the resurrection narratives fit together—without contradiction.

In Christ,

Pastor Don