



Some have claimed the different accounts of **Jesus’ resurrection** appearances in the four Gospels and 1 Corinthians are “proofs” these Bible books are riddled with errors and contradictions. If true, these would, in turn, “prove” the Bible not to be inspired of God, or infallible, as many Christians believe that it is.

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The Bible itself says that these different resurrection appearances confirm the Bible’s inspiration by God.

“To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3 NKJV, emphasis added)

When people point out the differences in the reporting in the Gospels and 1 Corinthians of which individuals saw the resurrected Jesus and claim these are contradictions, they actually point out something that defeats their own argument. Rather than contradicting one another, the differences in the reporting actually show that *these five different accounts are independent of one another*. They were written, not in collusion with each other to fabricate a myth or legend, but by five different men who had different perspectives. Each of the writers accurately recorded the events they wrote about from their differing perspectives.

Two of these writers were **“apostles whom He had chosen”** during His earthly ministry, **“to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:2-3 NKJV)**, namely Matthew and John. **“Mark, my son in Christ,”** as Peter called him, was his recorder of his eyewitness account, so Mark’s gospel is essentially the apostle Peter’s eyewitness account. **(1 Peter 5:13 NCV)** Luke, who was not an eyewitness himself, notes that others had **“set out to write accounts about the events**

that have been fulfilled among us. They used eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples.” (Luke 1:1-2 NLT) These writings were not legends, or rumors, they were accurate historical accounts based on eyewitness statements. Luke says that he, **“having carefully investigated everything from the beginning ... decided to write a careful account” (Luke 1:3 NLT)**, using accurate, truthful, factual material. Luke traveled extensively with the Apostle Paul, who had encountered the resurrected Jesus a couple of years after Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus personally selected Paul to be his “chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as the people of Israel.” (Acts 9:15 NLT) Paul and Luke, during their extensive travels, spent time with many of the original early Christians over a period of a number of years. Furthermore, the fact is that the **“Spirit of the truth” would “guide [them] into all truth” (John 16:13 NLT)**, as Jesus promised. So it proved to be, the New Testament writings were guided by the holy Spirit.

Another point worth noting is that each writer had to be highly selective in choosing which material to record. Why? John, using hyperbole, explains in his endnote: **“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” (John 21:25 NIV, emphasis added)** John also made a similar admission when he stated the purpose of his writing: **“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.” (John 20:30 NIV), emphasis added)** So John plainly states there are multitudes of Jesus’ activities that he did not record. Although the synoptics do not explicitly state it, it is obvious also that they had to be highly selective about which of numerous events in Jesus’ life to record.

If each Gospel account was identical, then why would the New Testament not have but one Gospel book? In that case, there would be no need to waste all the time writing materials and make four copies of the same identical account. The reason the New Testament includes these four Gospels is because there are four independent, accurate accounts of Jesus’ life, with major emphasis on the events of the week leading up to his execution, and the events that follow.

If the differences in the four Gospels and 1 Corinthians concerned the main points, there may be some cause for concern. Let's take an example of this. Mark's Gospel in its original form ended at 16:8, and included no resurrection appearances of Jesus. The other three Gospels and 1 Corinthians do record resurrection appearances of Jesus, with variations. Is Mark's omission here a contradiction? No, omission is not tantamount to contradiction, in, and of, itself. Notice two key points:

1. His resurrection is announced. **(Mark 16:6)**
2. One of his appearances is also announced, and the disciples are instructed accordingly. **(Mark 16:7)**

The four Gospels and 1 Corinthians are all in tight agreement on major points:

1. Jesus died for our sins in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. **(1 Corinthians 15:3)**
2. Jesus was buried. **(1 Corinthians 15:4)**
3. Jesus was resurrected on the third day, according to Old Testament prophecy. **(1 Corinthians 15:4)**
4. Jesus appeared to others in his resurrected state. **(1 Corinthians 15:5-8)**

None of the four Gospels, or 1 Corinthians, individually, give all the details regarding Jesus' resurrection appearances. These accounts supplement each other. No group of four or five witnesses, news reporters, or news outlets will give identical reports when reporting a series of major events. They will agree on the main points, but the details will differ.

Yes, the four Gospels and 1 Corinthians differ in their reporting of who saw the resurrected Jesus. Critics claim these differences amount to contradictions. However, this is actually not the case. Why not? For one thing, most of the reporting done in the five accounts lacks specific time references, which pulls the rug out from under the so-called "chronological contradictions."

While carefully examining the five accounts of the witnesses of the resurrected Jesus, we can

come up with who saw Jesus first, etc. (John 20:1-18) But the exact chronological order of these witnesses is not the major event. The event of gigantic proportions is the resurrection of Jesus.

One alleged contradiction is Paul’s list of witnesses in **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**. He lists Cephas (Peter) first, so critics claim this contradicts John’s account in which Mary Magdalene first meets the resurrected Jesus. However, looking carefully at Paul’s account, we notice that he does not say that Cephas (Peter) saw the risen Jesus first. Paul states “that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas.” (**1 Corinthians 15:4-5 NIV**) Paul writes factually, without giving every detail, including an exhaustive list of different witnesses.

As to the critics’ assertion that none of the writers of the four Gospels met with the risen Jesus, again, a careful examination of the evidence proves this to be an invalid objection, as follows:

1. **“The apostles he had chosen”** were given **“many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days.”** “The apostles he had chosen” included Gospel writers Matthew and John. Peter was also an apostle, and we know Mark was his writer for the second Gospel. (**Acts 1:1-3 NIV**)
2. Risen Jesus commanded them: **“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift.... Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem.... Those present were Peter, John... and Matthew.”** (**Acts 1:4, 12-13 NIV**) They decided to select a replacement for Judas, **“appointed to serve with us as a witness to his resurrection.”** (**Acts 1:22 NJB**) The new apostle had to be one who had witnessed the risen Jesus, so he could **“serve with us as a witness to his resurrection.”** “Us” here included witnesses Matthew, Peter and John.

The Bible writers were humble men, never seeking glory for themselves. Peter, whom Mark recorded, did explicitly state that he was an “eyewitness” of Jesus’ suffering, etc. (**1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16**) John also three times mentions his personally witnessing Jesus

throughout his earthly ministry and post resurrection appearances. **(John 19:35; John 21:24; 1 John 1:1-3)**

None of these so-called “contradictions” in the different accounts are really contradictions. They can easily be explained by carefully examining the evidence in the Gospels and 1 Corinthians. The accounts mesh together to tell one unified account of **“the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1 NASB)** Even the critics, by accusing the accounts of contradictions, are inadvertently admitting their independence rather than their collusion. The critics thus help to defeat their own case by so doing.

“God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish.” (1 Corinthians 1:20 NLT)