

Easter Accounts

The celebration of Easter is just around the corner! Actually it's coming this Sunday! And every Sunday. Why? Because the Sundays in Lent are NOT part of the Lenten season. Look at the calendar and you'll see that there are 46 days in the 40 day season of Lent. We don't count the Sundays, because that's a celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord every week. Therefore, we call the Sundays of the Lenten season the "Sundays IN Lent" not the Sundays of Lent.

As we read the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and take a close look at the story of what actually happened on that first Easter Sunday morning, it may seem that the eyewitnesses are reporting totally different events. For instance, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 (verse 14), Saint Paul says, *"If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."* So, how could the Bible accounts disagree on such an important, history-changing, life-changing story? Is the story of Christ's resurrection all jumbled up?

I will answer this question, but first I'd like to ask another question ... what would you or other folks say if the accounts agreed? I think they would begin by saying that there were no contradictions. That would be obvious. They might even say that God is consistent. Both true and understandable. However, think back to the time when you were a student in high school literature class and you and a fellow student turned in an essay and you both ended up with exactly the same words. I'm sure the teacher would be mighty suspicious of the possibility that the two of you had shared papers with each other. In other words, you cheated! It could also mean that one of you really knew your stuff, but the other just had good eyesight.

Now, let's suppose these Gospels agreed in every period and comma. What would people say then? Wouldn't believers be likely to say: "Look, God has inspired these writers to say exactly the same thing in exactly the same words."? Unbelievers might say that it looks like Matthew, Mark, and Luke just copied their stuff from John or from someone else.

Now let's get back to the original question ... How come the writers don't all agree in their accounts of what happened on Resurrection Sunday morning? There is sort of an implied challenge. In other words: If the events of that morning are so earth-shakingly important as Saint Paul said they were, couldn't God inspire the writers to get it correct?

To answer that, let me start with a bit of history. There were many people who were on the parade route way back in November of 1963 in Dallas the day President Kennedy was shot and killed. Yet, when they were asked what they saw and heard, depending on what they saw and heard, they came up with differing reports. There were, however, two things they agreed on. Everyone who was there in close proximity to the assassination said the President had been shot. And those who were at the hospital said he had died.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John report different things concerning the events of Resurrection Sunday. They did that because one thought this was important, another reported something else because he thought that piece of information was significant. Just because they focus on different bits of the story, doesn't mean they contradict each other. The people at the hospital who said JFK was dead didn't contradict those on the

street who said "he's been shot." In the same way, just because Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us about the women going to the tomb, and John doesn't pick up the story until he and Peter go there, that doesn't mean those other events didn't happen. It just means each reported what they thought was important. And the Holy Spirit used their individual skills and pieces of knowledge to bring us a picture of what happened that day.

Is there anything the Evangelists agree on? Yes! Everybody agreed that Jesus had died, they agreed Jesus was buried, and they agreed that Jesus was now alive. And that's exactly what Paul was saying when he talked about the importance of Jesus' resurrection. We can believe it, because different writers, seeing different things, reporting different parts of the same event, are in agreement: the dead Christ did indeed come back to life. And because He lives, we are forgiven and reconciled to God.

As we approach this great celebration this and every Sunday, may the joy of Christ's life, death and resurrection permeate every fiber of your being. I can, and it will bring you comfort and peace now and forever!!

That's the View from Here.