

Law & Order, III

The Road to Recognition

April 10, 2016

Welcome to where we're weaving the Word to learn the love of the One who loves us most!



What is the only manmade thing in Heaven?

What's the most beautiful thing in Heaven?

Because, it's *manmade!* And, it's *not us.*

We're taking the **Empty Tomb Challenge**, thrown down by many outspoken atheists, such as former pastor, Dan Barker:

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 Cor 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 (Mat 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21). Also read Acts (1:3-12) and I Corinthians (15:3-8). Then, **without omitting a single detail from these separate accounts, write a simple, chronological narrative ... 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?

More than fair! In fact ...

We've already shown the majority of Dan's 17 accusations to be nothing more than **sound logic built on a false premise that the Gospels are identical accounts of the same event.**

They're overlapping news reports of separate stories surrounding it; and thus, they must be woven together, as Isaiah instructs us, line upon line and here-a-little, there-a-little. (Is 28:9-10)

An Easter Challenge For Christians
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By Dan Barker, Freedom From Religion Foundation


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 162 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 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?



- What time did the women visit the tomb?
- Who were the women?
- What was their purpose?
- Was the tomb open when they arrived?
- Who was at the tomb when they arrived?
- Where were these messengers situated?
- What did the messenger(s) say?
- Did the women tell what happened?
- When Mary returned, did she know Jesus had risen?
- When did Mary first see Jesus?
- Could Jesus be touched after the resurrection?
- After the women, to whom did Jesus first appear?
- Where did Jesus first appear to the disciples?
- Did the disciples believe the two men?
- What happened at the appearance?
- Did Jesus stay on earth for a while?
- Where did the ascension take place?





Here's our **Empty Tomb Timeline** thus far:

[Photo 1] Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, first, while it's dark. She finds a gap between the shifted stone and the tomb-wall.



[Photo 2] She brings back a beloved disciple ... *and Peter*. The two men leave to gather everyone for an emergency meeting.

[Photo 3] Mary stays behind and **two angels appear** inside the tomb. **[Photo 4]** As the sun rises **Jesus appears**, but she thinks He's a gardener. Mary Magdalene goes to get Jesus' mom, to come and see the tomb.



[Photo 5] An earthquake-angel rolls the stone and stuns the soldiers. The angel tells the two arriving Marys to go inside. **[Photo 6]** Inside the tomb, they encounter **a young man in white**. They flee, the angel leaves, and some of the soldiers depart.

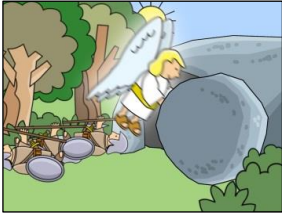
[Photo 7] The Galilean women arrive with spices and are very confused. **Two men in white** remind them of what Jesus taught them.

Back on the trail, Jesus is appearing to Mary and Mary.

All the women gather at the emergency meeting to testify. But, nobody believes their seemingly nonsensical stories. **[Photo 8]** But, *Peter returns, alone*, and **encounters Jesus**.

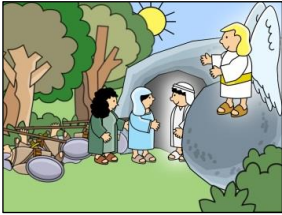


Now, the last set of seeming discrepancies concern Jesus' three appearances to His disciples. **Did He appear first in Jerusalem or in Galilee, far, far away?** About 80 miles. Let's read **Mark 16:12-14** in (BLUE), **Luke 24:13-40** in (GREEN), and **John 20:19-20a** in (BROWN). No verse is left out or out of order. And, we begin with *two most mysterious statements* ...

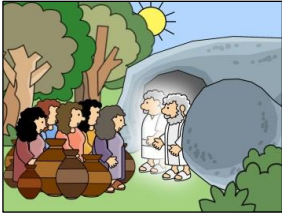


Now *Afterward that same day* [about seven hours later, around 2:00 pm] **Jesus appeared in a different form** [*morphē: external appearance*] **to two of them** [from the emergency meeting] while they were walking in the country.

Who are these two disciples? Why do we assume they're both *men*? One is named **Cleopas** (Luke 24:18). That's **Greek**. The Vulgate Bible (compiled in 382^{AD}) renders it: **Cleophas**. That's **Latin**. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of **Clopas** (John 19:25). That's **Aramaic**. The Vulgate renders it: **Cleophas. That's Latin; and most likely the same man.**



And now, **how did Jesus change His form?** Well, *technically*, He didn't. We did. He just *appeared in* His changed form. **What's the one and only man-made thing in Heaven? The scars on Jesus.** When John sees the triumphant "*Lion of the tribe of Judah ...* **[He describes what he sees as] a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne**". (Rev 5:1-13)



Revelation echoes this image of the scarred Lamb 28 times!¹ **Did you expect to see a scar-free Savior?** No indication of the cost? **His gruesome scars are an integral part of His glorified body!** He shows His disciples the nail marks in His hands and feet, and the spear scar on His side; *which means: His back still bears the healed stripes of His scourging.* (Is 53:5)



¹ Revelation 5:6, 5:8, 5:12, 5:13, 6:1, 6:3, 6:5, 6:7, 6:16, 7:9, 7:10, 7:14, 7:17, 12:11, 13:8, 14:1, 14:4a, 14:4b, 14:10, 15:3, 17:14, 19:7, 19:9, 21:9, 21:14, 21:23, 21:27, 22:1, 22:3



So, what do you suppose His face looked like?

[As Isaiah prophesied] I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard ... **[Not a bone was broken (He wasn't to be eternally broken), but much skin was removed along with the beard and the beatings!]** ... his **appearance** was so **disfigured** beyond that of any man [Later, when He appears with His beardless face and horrific, though healed, scars: **"None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord"** (John 21:12)] and his **form** [to'ar: looks; figure; beauty] marred beyond human likeness **"Jesus appeared in a different form"** (Mark 16:12)] ... **Like one from whom men hide their faces** [as Mary Magdalene did, until she realized who it was and then turned back and recognized Him (John 20:14,16)] ... Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows ... he was pierced ... he was crushed ... the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. – Isaiah 50:6a; 52:13-15; 53:3-5 NIV

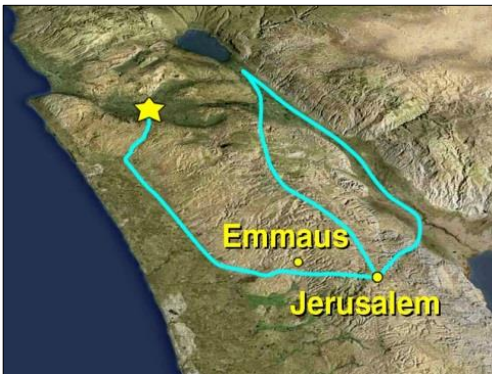
Like burns on the face of a fireman who carries you to safety, **his changed appearance defies beauty and defines heroic glory!** What's the most beautiful thing in Heaven? **The unblemished Lamb who saved us from sin and death, and became the eternally scarred Lamb who presents us unblemished!**

... **two of them** [that were at the emergency meeting; most likely husband and wife, Cleopas and Mary, who was most likely one of the women at the tomb (Luke 24:10)] were going to a village called **Emmaus**, about seven miles from Jerusalem [about a 2.5 hour walk]. They were [upset and unhappy (Luke 24:17)] talking **with each other** [allēlōn: back and forth] about everything that had happened [concerning the women's rejected testimony]. As they **talked** and **discussed** [syzēteō: reasoned; disputed] these things with each other, Jesus himself [in His changed form] came up and walked along with them; but **they were kept from recognizing him.**

Where do you suppose Jesus was going? Let's read four verses: a few days before the cross, Jesus said, **"But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."** (Mat 26:32; Mark 14:28) At the tomb, the angel said, **"Tell his disciples: 'He ... is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.'"** (Mat 28:5-7), and the young man in white said, **"He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.** (Mark 16:7), and even "Jesus said to them, **'... tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'**" (Mat 28:10-11) So ... where do you suppose Jesus is going?

He asked them, **"What are you discussing together** [What (tis) words (logos) are these (houtos) that (hos) are being thrown in turn (antiballō) at (pros) each other (allēlōn) Yep! Married!] as you walk along?" They [turned to him and] **stood still**, their **faces downcast**. One of them, named **Cleopas**, asked him, **"Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem [""cause we've never seen (or heard about) you; and we travel this road a lot"]** and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. [This is what it's like to walk with Jesus: **He directs indirectly, answers with questions, and you usually don't know it's Him**] "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a **prophet**, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. [Hmm ... just a prophet?] The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, **some of our women** [in the group Luke follows] amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning [with spices] but didn't find his body. [Luke 24:3] They came and told us that they had seen a vision [optasia: vision; appearance] of **angels**, [aggelos: angels; messengers] who said he was **alive**. [zaō: among the living (used only in Luke 24:5)] Then **some** [tis: a certain one; some] of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, **[Peter is the only one we're told went**

back (the only other is the “beloved disciple” who went earlier when told they’d taken Jesus’ body); and, this explains Jesus response when Cleopas adds] **but him they** [or: *he*] **did not see.**” [Oh, my. Peter didn’t tell ‘em!] He said to them, “**How** [ō: O! (an interjection)] **foolish you** [all] **are**, and how **slow** [*bradys: dull; stupid*] **of heart** [lit. “O! Foolish and stupid of heart”] to believe [trust] all that the prophets have spoken! [Like, the ‘young man’ inside the tomb, and the ‘two men who appeared to the group] Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, **Jesus acted as if he were going farther** [to make it clear He had a place to be, in Galilee, where they were all told to go and meet Him]. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them [to make it clear that there’s no reason to go if no friend or follower is gonna show].



Know what we learn at Emmaus? **There’s no reason for God to go where no one is waiting.** And *that one truth* is an entire message! What do you suppose He was gonna show-and-tell ‘em in Galilee? Well, there are three routes from Jerusalem to Galilee: along the Jordan; through Samaria; or, past Emmaus. **All aboard the Emmaus road to Galilee ... first stop: The Valley of Armageddon!** What do you suppose He was going to show-and-tell ‘em?! **We’ll never know. ‘Cause they never went. ‘Cause they weren’t waiting or watching or even willing.** Not even these two, who were already headed in the right direction, and inspired by scripture. **How many opportunities do we miss out on, simply by not obeying?**

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and **began to give it** [hand it] to them. [What will they both simultaneously see, as they remove the bread from His hands? Stretched and gapping nail scars and deep wrist rope burns] Then their **eyes were opened** [realized what they were seeing] and **they recognized him**, [like when you run into an old friend after many years, and you don’t recognize ‘em ... until you *do*; and then they suddenly appear] and he disappeared from their sight. [Well, He did the opposite, but you get it; when it comes to the blind eyes of unbelievers, **you won’t realize who He is, until you recognize what He’s done.** Oh! And, guess what He said, just before He vanished: “**I did appear to Peter!**”] They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and **opened** the Scriptures to us?” [*dianoigō: divided and drew apart; as in: “line upon line”, and “here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:9-10)*] They got up and returned **These returned** at once to Jerusalem. and reported it to the rest; There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together [in an upstairs room (Acts 1:12-13)] and saying, [to them] “It is **true!** The Lord **has** risen and has appeared to **Simon.**” [All eyes swivel to Simon Peter – “Huh?” – “Uh ... I was waiting for the right moment; because, there’s something you need to know, that I can’t make myself say without sobbing.”] **Then** the two told what had happened on the way, and how [this totally unrecognizable ghastly looking guy] **Jesus** was recognized by them when he broke the bread. **but** [believe it or not] they did not believe **them** either.

Maybe it’s because Peter is now changing his story. Or, maybe every guy in the room knows that it’s one thing for a husband to reject his wife’s testimony in a group setting, and another thing entirely with just the two, on the road back home! And, maybe Mary Magdalene and Jesus’ mom, who both saw Jesus, had *only told* what they were told to tell ... *and nothing more.* Or, **maybe they just don’t want to believe what they’re being told.** What about us?

Will you recognize Jesus?