

HARMONISING THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS GOSPEL DATA

The data on the alleged resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament shows lots of differences. Many say that that does not mean there are contradictions. Others say there are contradictions.

A lot of the material in the resurrection accounts has been harmonised by those cranks who pretend to believe there is no contradiction in the Bible. But the books never claim to be complementary and that is the way they treat them in order to reconcile them which is an abuse. So the Christians use a tactic that they have no evidence to justify to create evidence for Christ and the Bible. That is totally dishonest.

Miracles are also hauled in as explanations. For example, when one gospel says one angel was seen and another says there were more it is said that one angel may have been visible to some of the party though there were other angels there. So the miracle appearance of another angel is brought in or the miracle of invisibility. That totally contradicts Christianity's own doctrine that God respects nature in doing miracles and thus will always give us the gift of sensible and good evidence for the miracle.

Any contradiction at all can be "explained" when miracles are assumed. They say that God invites all into the Church and offers the gift of faith which means they accuse us of heresy and blasphemy and resisting God if we have an opinion unfavourable to their treatment of scripture. Their foisting their views on us is uncharitable.

Some say that the gospel writer of Mark knew of only one angel and Luke knew of two (24:4). They say this was not a contradiction. They say if you see Peter and Andrew and say hello to them and then you tell your wife that you said hello to Peter you are not denying that you met Andrew. They say you are not lying. But that depends. You could be lying this way. It depends on your intention. So Mark and Luke could be contradicting each other. Christians can't criticise the view that they are contradicting each other. If they do they are just being bigoted and dogmatic and want everybody to assume what they assume. If there were two angels Mark would have known. If you wish to say he probably knew then you are saying there is probably a contradiction. If you were giving evidence and your wife was a policewoman it would certainly be a lie to tell her that you said hello to Peter and not mention Andrew. The gospels claim to be giving evidence that the resurrection of Jesus really happened. Mark and Luke then are in contradiction.

Christians say that it is good to have seeming conflicts in the gospel stories though the conflicts can be resolved. This is nonsense. And yet these are the people who say that if testimonies from people match up too well something suspicious is happening. What could happen is you could have some witnesses learning off a story to tell and them all telling parts of it and not all they have learned off. That way you would have to match everything up and reconcile it all to get the full story.

Others don't worry about the contradictions and say that contradictions show that there is nothing contrived about the testimonies. They also say that if testimonies from different people match up too well something dodgy is happening. If so then the contradictions only show that the witnesses are sincere not that they are right. And it is simply untrue that contradictions mean the witnesses were necessarily sincere. What if some error was made that made the whole story accidentally seem better? For example, the gospel says that no body was seen in the tomb the morning Jesus rose. What if there was somebody who did see a body and that person was ignored as unreliable? You need to be talking to the witnesses to see what role the contradictions take, to see if they are signs of sincerity or signs of lying. We can't run this check so for Christians to say that differences or contradictions are signs of truthfulness is for them to make an unjustified assumption. If we are going to just assume then we don't need the testimonies at all for we are assuming anyway. We may as well just assume Jesus rose without even caring if there is evidence or not. In that case the gospels attempt to fill a need and fail and cannot be regarded as the word of God.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:51, "See I tell you a mystery a secret! We will not all sleep at death but we shall all be changed." A mystery in the original Greek means that this is a secret being disclosed to the initiated. The word was picked out of the Greek mystery schools and fraternities. Was the secret that we will not all die? No. Christianity always taught that there would be Christians alive for the second coming of Jesus. The secret was the change. Here Paul is speaking as if the body that goes to Heaven is dramatically changed. He speaks as if it was not heard before that the resurrection is not a mere resuscitation but a transformation. That contradicts the gospels if they claim that Jesus had a spirit like ghostly body that could materialise and de-materialise and so on. They are clear that whatever Jesus had it did not behave like any physical body. Paul inventing doctrines years after the alleged departure of Jesus into Heaven would be a bad sign.

Conclusion

Consistency in a witness or among witnesses is a negative test not a positive one. It does not mean that what they say is probably true. It only says, "No problems with consistency so we must now look to see if the reason for the consistency is that the tale is true. That involves looking for new data." If it was some obscure religion going about with contradictory scriptures, Christians would not take it seriously. They would say the contradictions disproved the religion. Uncharitably, they are applying a double-standard for their own scriptures are incoherent. They pay homage to bigotry in doing that. We will not be part of it. So we declare that the contradictions in the resurrection story show that the resurrection is not very believable. We do not believe. Contradictory beliefs are really not beliefs at all. They are just fighting each other. They are proof that one only imagines one believes.

The epistles of Paul decisively reject esoteric and elitist religious nonsense. The gospels and the New Testament claim to be for all people. That is not true if you need a theology degree to read them and get anything from them.

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