

Resurrection Morning Accounts

Across the Four Gospels

This chart compares the Resurrection morning accounts from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each Gospel provides a unique perspective, emphasizing different details while preserving the core truth: Jesus has risen. This comparison is helpful for understanding the diversity and unity in the Gospel witness.

Detail	Matt. 28:1–10	Mark 16:1–8	Luke 24:1–12	John 20:1–18
Who visits the tomb?	Mary Magdalene and 'the other Mary'	Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James), Salome	Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary (mother of James), others	Mary Magdalene (alone at first)
Time of visit	At dawn on the first day of the week	Very early, just after sunrise	Early dawn	While it was still dark
Stone status	Rolled away by an angel	Already rolled away	Already rolled away	Already rolled away
Presence of guards?	Yes — posted by Pilate, faint at angel's appearance	No mention	No mention	No mention
Who is at the tomb?	One angel, described in detail	One young man in white robe	Two men in dazzling clothes	Two angels later, but not initially
Message to the women	"Jesus has risen... go tell the disciples"	Same message	Same message — includes reminder of Jesus' prediction	No direct message from angels at first; Jesus himself appears to Mary
Reaction of women	Great fear and joy; they run to tell	Trembling, bewildered, afraid — initially say nothing	Tell the apostles; met with skepticism	Mary weeps; meets Jesus; becomes first personal witness
Apostles' response	Jesus later appears to them in Galilee	No immediate response mentioned	Disbelief, but Peter runs to the tomb	Peter and John run to the tomb after Mary tells them

Why Are There Different Angelic Figures at the Tomb?

The Gospel accounts differ in their descriptions of the angelic or divine messengers at Jesus' empty tomb. Rather than signaling contradiction, these variations highlight each Gospel writer's theological focus and narrative emphasis. Below is a breakdown of how each Gospel describes the scene and what it may mean.

Gospel	Description of Angelic Presence
Matthew 28:2–3	One angel, described as appearing like lightning, rolls away the stone and speaks to the women.
Mark 16:5	One young man in a white robe sitting on the right side of the tomb, delivering a message.
Luke 24:4	Two men in dazzling apparel stand beside the women; they remind them of Jesus' prediction.
John 20:12	Two angels in white sit where Jesus' body had been, appearing later when Mary weeps.

Interpretive Insights

Not a contradiction

- Different writers may focus on different parts of the event or specific figures (e.g., the one who spoke).

Two as testimony

- Luke may intentionally use two figures to align with the Jewish law of two witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Theological emphasis

- Each Gospel writer frames the event to fit their themes—power, mystery, transformation, or personal encounter.

Ultimately, all four Gospels proclaim the same astonishing truth: *the tomb was empty, and Jesus is risen. The variations do not diminish the message but invite us to see the resurrection from multiple faithful perspectives.*