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Resurrection Appearances (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Despite differences in these accounts, they can be harmonized to demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled prophecies and rose from the dead. Gregg notes that the number of times Jesus appeared to individuals after his resurrection is not clear, but the book of Acts suggests that he appeared to his disciples for 40 days. Regardless of the exact number of appearances, the independent witnesses and details surrounding the event offer strong evidence for the truthfulness of these Gospel accounts.

Transcript

Today we're going to be talking about some of the resurrection appearances of Christ. It's an interesting thing that while the Gospels give a fair amount of detail about the death of Jesus, about those six hours on the cross, and also they give a fair amount of detail on some of the appearances of Christ after his resurrection, one thing that none of the Gospels describes is the actual event. There's no record in the Gospels of the actual event of Jesus rising from the dead.

The proof that he has risen from the dead is abundantly demonstrated by his appearances and contacts with people and the supernatural phenomena that are all surrounding him. But it's an amazing thing because the most astonishing claim that Christianity makes about its founder is that he rose from the dead. Now, one would think that if the Gospel writers were not concerned about being truthful, if they were concerned only about establishing this incredible claim, that one of them would have been highly tempted to fabricate some description of how his body began to glow and sat upright on the slab where he'd lay and all the gray clothes burst off him and flames and all this dramatic stuff.

None of those things apparently happened. I mean, he did sit upright, no doubt, but what I'm saying is you would expect a fictional story, if it were not true, but if someone was trying to promote it as true, to at least give some kind of detail of this, the most extraordinary thing that is claimed about Christianity, that is that Jesus rose from the dead. And I think it is a credit to the honesty of the writers of the Gospels that none of

them attempted to do that since none of them were there to be witnesses.

No one was a witness of the actual event. No one was present when Jesus rose from the dead. Many were present at times when he appeared later, after his resurrection, but since there was no eyewitness that could confirm exactly what took place in the event itself, none of the Gospels ventured to describe it.

They must have had overwhelming temptation to want to include a description of that, but they had no information, so they didn't give any. They didn't make any up. As I say, to me, that's a very strong credit to the writers that they did not take it on themselves to fabricate or to make anything up for which they didn't have any eyewitness testimony.

Now, as we come to the story of the appearances of Jesus to people after the resurrection, we find a wide variety in the four Gospels. They have this in common. They all record that Jesus appeared to people on Sunday morning, which was the morning of his resurrection.

They overlap one another in some cases in telling of certain instances of his appearing to people, but no two accounts are the same. No two accounts give the same number or the same selection in any sense of the appearances of Christ. We have to assume he appeared many times.

In fact, the book of Acts tells us that this is true. In Acts chapter 1, the impression is given that over a period of 40 days, Jesus was appearing to his disciples. Now, that figure is not given in the Gospels, but Acts, which is written by the same man who wrote Luke, tells us this.

It says in verse 3 of Acts chapter 1, to whom he also presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during 40 days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. So, Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to them over a period of 40 days. Why that length of time? You know, 40 in the Bible is sometimes a significant number, but I've generally heard that 40 is the number of judgment, but that wouldn't seem to fit this selection of 40 days.

But, it would occur to me, just from the times that 40 is used, one thing that the number seems to have in common in most cases is it does represent a time of transition. Does it not? Think about it. The Jews came out of Egypt, and they came into the Promised Land.

But, between the time they came out of Egypt and the time they came into the Promised Land, there was a 40-year period of wandering, which was transitional. They weren't quite in, and they weren't, I mean, they were out of the old habitation, but they weren't into the new place yet. Not fully.

And then, Jesus died in 30 AD, instituting the new covenant, but the old covenant was still around for another 40 years, and then it collapsed. And, during that time, the Jews

who were believers in Christ were definitely in sort of limbo. They weren't sure if they were Messianic Jews or what they were.

They still worshipped in the temple, although they believed in Christ, and so forth. It was transitional time, and then when the temple was destroyed, then transition was over. It was just church, no Judaism.

Jesus made his transition from private life into public life after 40 days in the wilderness, being tempted. That was the transitional period between the time of his obscurity and the time of his going public. And, I suppose, even the 40 days and 40 nights of the flood, in Noah's day, could be said to be transitional in some respects, between an old world and a new world that was being established as a result, but I don't know that I'd press that one quite as much.

But the 40 days that Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension, no doubt was an important transitional passage for the disciples, because prior to his death, they had been with him solidly for three and a half years, or many of them had been with him almost that long, and they were accustomed to his physical presence and had learned to be quite dependent upon him, to correct them, to answer questions for them, to protect them from storms, to feed them if they were out in the wilderness with no food. I mean, he'd been like a father to little children, to them. And now, the time would soon come, at his ascension, when they would never see him again in their lifetime.

He would be absolutely gone, in one sense. Visibly, they would not be able to speak to him and hear his voice speaking back to them, they wouldn't be able to look into his face, they would have to live entirely by faith, they'd be walking by faith and not by sight. But between the time that he was continuously with them, in his physical presence, and the time when he was going to be continuously absent from them in his physical presence, there was this forty days of conditioning, I think, where he would appear and disappear.

He'd come and he'd go. In fact, he would even, when he would appear to them, he would quote back to them things they had said in his absence, as if to let them know that he had in fact been around after all, though they couldn't see him. You know how Thomas said, you know, I won't believe it until I put my finger in the holes in his hands and put my hand into the hole in his side.

Jesus was not visible at that time, which is why Thomas wasn't believing. But when Jesus appeared to him eight days later, he said, Thomas, put your finger in the holes in my hands, put your hand in my side, making it obvious that he knew exactly what Thomas had said, meaning that Jesus had been the invisible eavesdropper there, even when they couldn't see him. Now, what was this all about? It would have perhaps been too traumatic for them to just pass from having him with them all the time to having him

never with them visibly, so that they would have to just make a total change in their thinking, that he's still with us, but in a totally different sense.

But he gave them about six weeks to adjust their thinking, during which time he wanted them to learn that he would still be with them even in his absence, so to speak, even when his physical presence was no longer visible to them, that he was still with them. And he didn't take them into that lesson cold turkey. He gave them a transitional period from the time that he was always with them to the time he'd always be gone, where he'd be sometimes with them, sometimes not with them.

He'd be appearing to them many times. Now, we cannot say what the total number of appearances of Christ were after his resurrection. There's probably, if you add them all up, a dozen or more mentioned in the Scriptures.

But there's no guarantee that we have a total accounting of it even there, because none of the Gospels gives the total number, which means that none of them is being careful to give the total number, and it's possible that even among the four, when you combine them, we still don't have the total number, since it was not in the interest of any of them to give the total accounting. Each Gospel writer recorded a few appearances of Jesus and left out others that they no doubt were aware of. Now, remember the Gospel writers were not unacquainted with each other.

Matthew and John had both been among the twelve and had spent years together, and no doubt spent years together after the resurrection too, there in Jerusalem, as the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Peter likewise. The same could be said of him, and Mark wrote the Gospel according to Peter.

Luke was not a companion of theirs quite in the same intensive degree, but he insists at the beginning of his writing that he had consulted with those who were eyewitnesses. He had a thorough knowledge of everything about this story, and that he wrote as one who could come with the highest authority as a historian, and certainly we have reason to believe him. So here's a bunch of guys who probably all knew the same story.

They had conversed among themselves, no doubt dozens or hundreds of times, before the Gospels came to be written. They had no doubt pooled their information and knew darn well what had happened, and probably every one of them, if you cornered them, could tell you the whole list of all the times Jesus appeared to everybody, but in their Gospels they selected a few here and a few there, just to make the point. We don't know exactly why they selected the ones they did, but we can see that that's what they did.

Now, the point I want to make is there's a tremendous challenge to us in harmonizing the four Gospel accounts of the appearances of Jesus. There are, in fact, people who say you can't harmonize them. There are people who say it's impossible, you just can't harmonize them.

And what they mean by that, of course, is that they're contradictory. If you can't harmonize two stories, then they're contradictory. Harmonizing just means if you find some way that they can be consistent with each other.

And if there's no way to find a possibility of them being consistent with each other, you've got contradictions. Now, I personally think you can harmonize them. It is difficult, but it can be done.

And I'm going to attempt to do that in our treatment. But I want to say that the differences in the accounts have often been pointed to by skeptics as one of the evidences of the weakness of the Gospel's credibility, of the writer's credibility, because they don't tell the same story. A couple of them are going to give the impression that Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb with several other women and saw an angel there, you get the impression.

John's Gospel is only going to mention Mary coming alone, and she doesn't see an angel. And there's going to be mention of two angels in some accounts, and of one angel and another who aren't telling the same story. And these kinds of differences are said to be hopelessly in conflict with each other, and therefore weaken the credibility of the writers of the Gospels.

Now, I see it entirely differently. Of course, I feel we can harmonize all the accounts. I've got no problem whatsoever there.

I shouldn't say no problem. It is difficult, but it's not impossible. But given even the assumption, which the skeptic makes, that you cannot harmonize the accounts, suppose the skeptic were right, and there were some genuine contradictions between these, that Luke thought the first person to see Jesus was, say, Peter, and John thought the first person to see Jesus was Mary Magdalene, and let's say they both said that, and they can't be both right.

Even if that were true, that doesn't mean the Gospel writers were not writing the truth the best they knew it. And furthermore, the very differences in their accounts prove that they wrote independently, though they had many opportunities to compare notes and probably talked about it among themselves a great deal, they wrote independently of each other, in no sense trying to say the same thing that one of the other writers said, in no sense trying to make their views seem more credible artificially by copying what someone else said. The very differences and the difficulties they present in harmonizing them prove that the Gospel writers wrote entirely independent accounts, and that being so means that we have four independent witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And even if some of the details, which I do not grant to be the case, but even if some of the details prove to be hard to accept because of the contradiction among the witnesses, yet when you have four independent witnesses to the same event, first of all, you expect

them not to all say exactly the same thing, no two witnesses are going to say exactly the same two things unless they've independently and dishonestly gotten together and colluded to tell the same tale. It's clear that no such collusion has taken place among the Gospel writers. That's in their favor.

But, as I said, even witnesses in a court of law may sometimes make some mistakes or even lie, but if you have four independent witnesses who all say that the accident occurred, that the red car went through the red light and hit a green car that was going through the green light, if all the witnesses concur on that, then whatever else may be said. One says the light was only yellow for a second and that was why he went through it, and the other says, no, it was yellow for ten seconds. I mean, you've still got the fact of the accident well established by witnesses.

Some of the details are a little harder to establish by confirmatory testimony, but that's just in the nature of the loss of evidence. I mean, if you can have independent witnesses, you can have different ways that they tell the story, different details they remember, and in most cases, even mistakes on the part of some witnesses, but we don't call that discrediting the event. This is the amazing thing, that all four of these witnesses, with the obvious proofs of independence in their accounts, they all testify to, A, Sunday morning, some women came to the tomb.

The tomb was already empty. A messenger at the tomb met them and told them that Jesus was risen. Subsequently, all of them saw Jesus in different places and so did a lot of other people, and some of them handled him and ate with him, and he told them things that, you know, guaranteed that he was, you know, the same guy and so forth.

And, I mean, that much we have for independent witnesses on those points, and if we weren't even sure about all the details, which I believe all the details are true, we'd have a good strong case for the resurrection of Christ in the gospel writings. Now, the difficulty in handling it, of course, is that because no two gospels give anything like the same order or collection of events, we have to kind of bounce around all the time if we're going to try to take it chronologically. I had almost been tempted not to even attempt to do it chronologically, but in some cases I think we need to do so in order to show that it can be harmonized.

Let me show you the first problem we meet by just comparing the opening verses of the last chapters of Matthew, Mark, and Luke and of the 20th chapter of John. In Matthew 28, Matthew 28 gives probably the most complete version of the earliest chronological information of the resurrection account. Matthew 28, 1 says, Now after the Sabbath, the Sabbath is Saturday, so this is Sunday morning.

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week, which is Sunday, began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. Now, we're not told who this other Mary was exactly. Probably that other Mary that had been at the foot of the cross who

was the mother of James and Joseph, James the lesser of mothers.

And behold, there was a great earthquake. This is unique in Matthew. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it.

His countenance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And the guards shook with fear of him and became like dead men. They were paralyzed with fear.

Next we read of the angel speaking to him. But before we get to that, let's take a look over at Mark's gospel, Mark 16. Now when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices that they might come and anoint him.

Now this, I believe Matthew didn't tell us, is that they brought spices to anoint him. We're just told in Matthew that the two Marys came to the tomb, not telling us why. Mark tells us that they came to anoint the body and adds that it was not just Mary and Mary, it was also Salome that was with them.

That's a new bit of information. Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen and they said among themselves, who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us? But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away for it was very large. Okay, now pretty much the same story.

A little extra detail, they were wondering who was going to roll the stone away from them. There's no reference to the earthquake or the angel moving the stone, but we can presume that that happened before this point when they got near the tomb, they saw the tomb, the stone was moved. They didn't see the angel at this point.

Although it says in verse 5, when they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe who was an angel and spoke to them. We'll talk about that later. Let's look at Luke 24 now and compare this.

We're not going to do this quite on every detail, but at the very beginning it's kind of necessary. In Luke 24, verse 1, Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they and certain other women with them came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. Now it just says the women, whoever they are, what does it say? They and certain other women with them.

Who are they? I presume it's the women mentioned at the end of chapter 23, verse 55, and the women who had come with him from Galilee. Okay, well that's the same women we have named in the other Gospels we looked at. That would be Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John.

Now they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, and they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Okay, we'll stop there. We've got now this account from these three Gospels.

As we now know, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome came to the tomb. They saw the stone had been removed. Matthew tells us an angel had moved it in conjunction with an earthquake which had resulted in the guards falling down like dead men.

We never read again of these guards until they are paid off by the priests later in Matthew 28. And so we have to assume that sometime after they became dead men, they got to their senses and fled. They must have woke up and when no one else was around, ran into town.

But we don't hear about them again until a little later. Now John 20. Now here's where it's real different.

It's similar, in some ways it's the same, but it's different. John 20 verse 1. On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been rolled, taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and said to them, they have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.

Peter therefore went out and the other disciple and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. That would be John, of course.

And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying there, yet he did not go in. John didn't. But Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb and he saw the linen clothes lying there in the handkerchief that had been around Jesus' head, not lying with the linen clothes but folded together in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, John, who came to the tomb first, went in also and saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead. They still didn't understand this even though Jesus had talked to them about it.

But they didn't know the Scripture said it. Why? Because the Scripture says it in veiled terms. Jesus hadn't opened their understanding yet to understand the Scripture.

Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping. Apparently she came up behind them after they came and left.

She arrived more slowly than they. And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Then they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? And she said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him. Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.

Jesus said to her, Mary. And she turned and said to him, Rabboni, which is to say, teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, or touch me not, the King James says, in some translations they don't touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had spoken these things to her. Now the differences here are as follows. The three Gospels we read a moment ago, at least Matthew and Mark, named Mary Magdalene as one of the women who came to the tomb.

Apparently, three women came to the tomb. In fact, probably more did. Because the way Luke reads it, notice this.

In Luke 24.1, very early in the morning, they, that's a plurality, at least two women, and certain other women, plural, with them, came to the tomb, implying that there were at least four, because the original women and certain other women, that's got to be at least two and two if women is plural in both cases. Of course, other women is in italics, but it's implied in the Greek, which would suggest maybe there were even four or more women there. But we only have the names of three, and in one account we only have the names of two, and in John we only have the name of one.

Yes, Mark. Uh-huh. Okay, right, and other women too.

Right. It was Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them. Now Johanna might have been another name for Salome, possibly.

Or Johanna might have been yet a fourth woman in addition to Salome. What we see here is we have very sketchy accounts. But the thing about, thank you Mark for pointing that out, in the three synoptic gospel, is that we have several women, including Mary Magdalene, coming to the tomb about daylight.

And they see the tomb is, the stone's been rolled away. Now the synoptic gospel tells of the women going into the tomb and seeing an angel and getting a message from an angel, but John tells us nothing of that. John tells us that Mary came to the tomb, she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb, and turned and ran and got Peter and John.

Now how can this be harmonized? It can be. It can be. It's not the easiest thing in the world, but it can be.

Mary Magdalene, when she came to the tomb early in the morning, was accompanied by several other women. As they approached the tomb, it became evident long before they got there that the stone was moved. Mary, seeing the stone moved, assumed the worst, assumed someone had stolen the body, and turned around, left the other women, and went back to get Peter and John.

The other women, however, continued into the tomb, as per the accounts of the synoptic gospels. So Mary Magdalene had separated herself from the group. The synoptics don't tell us that, but John gives us that detail.

Before the women went into the tomb and encountered the angel who spoke to them, she didn't wait around long enough to hear what the angel had to say. She assumed the body was stolen. She ran to tell the disciples, and then we read of them coming.

Now, the harmony would imply that since when the apostles, Peter and John, got there, the women were not there. That whatever happened with the women at the tomb must have taken place before Peter and John got there. We don't know how far they had to travel, how far back Mary had to go to get them, or how far they had to run.

But in the time that Mary went to tell the apostles, in the time it took for them to get there, the other women had gone into the tomb and gotten a message from the angel, and then left. So that they were gone by the time Peter and John came, and the angel wasn't even there anymore. Peter and John didn't even see the angel.

Now, that's strange, but that's not really a serious problem. Let's therefore say, Mary has gone back to get Peter and John, but what happens with the women at the tomb? Well, that's where we have Matthew, Mark, and Luke to inform us. And according to Matthew 28, we read that the angel actually that moved the stone then sat upon the stone.

He apparently didn't sit there permanently, since he wasn't there when Peter and John got there, and probably wasn't there when Mary got there. But he sat there for a while, maybe every time the guards would sort of open one eye to see if it was still there, it was still there, and he'd sort of back down again, you know? You know, they were laying there like that, and they'd think, is he still there? Yeah, he's still there. You know, keep faking, keep playing possum.

Eventually, the angel probably stepped into the tomb. The guards got up and took off. Okay, so now the women are at the tomb.

The guards perhaps are gone by this time, and the angel has gone inside, it would appear, not from Matthew, but from Mark, that the conversation between them and the angel took place inside the tomb. Matthew doesn't specify that, but he doesn't deny it

either. But the angel answered, verse 5, Matthew 28, 5, and said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified.

He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and indeed he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him.

Behold, I have told you. So they departed quickly, apparently before Peter and John got there, from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples' word. Now let's look over at Mark's gospel, if you don't mind flipping around.

This is the only way we can really harmonize it. Mark 16 again. So, last we read in verse 4, the women saw the stone was rolled away.

John tells us that it was at that point that Mary took off to tell the others. But the other women entered the tomb, according to verse 5. Entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe, sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. There's no contradiction between this and Matthew.

Matthew calls it an angel. Mark calls him the young man in a white robe, but angels are often described as men. They come in human appearance, both in the Old Testament and the New.

I mean, in Acts chapter 1, when Jesus ascended, we're told that two men in white apparel said, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing into heaven? The same Jesus who has been taken up from you should be come again in like manner as you saw him go. Those were certainly angels who gave that information, but they're said to be men. So we've got no problem here.

Some people say, ah, two gospels. One gospel says it was a man, one gospel says it was an angel. Well, that's no problem.

An angel is frequently referred to as a man. So here, they come into the tomb. Matthew didn't tell us that the angel had gone into the tomb, but Mark does.

And they see him there, and what does he say? He says to them, Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who is crucified. Sounds pretty close to Matthew.

He is risen. He is not here. See the place where the Lord, where they laid him.

Matthew said, Where the Lord lay. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, and of course, Peter was already on his way there, possibly at this point, that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, as he said to you.

And they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now, they said nothing to anyone.

It doesn't sound like Matthew, because Matthew said in 28.8, they went with fear and great joy and ran to bring his disciples word.

But what we should understand Mark to be saying is that they told no one along the way. They were in such a hurry to fulfill their commission, they were told to go tell the disciples this. Matthew tells us they did go and tell the disciples this.

Mark says they spoke to no one, meaning that they didn't stop along the way to speak to anyone. They were in a hurry to go and get to where the disciples were. I mean, that's the obvious way to harmonize that, and it's not strange or difficult at all.

Okay? So they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now, going to Luke. We have two angels this time.

It says in verse 3, 24.3, Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He's not here, he's risen.

Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his word. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Okay? And it says, And it was Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. But their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. Now, don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves.

Thus far we've found, Mary and these other women approached the tomb. They saw the stone had been rolled away. Mary left to go tell Peter and John.

The other women went into the tomb and saw two angels, Mark and Matthew only mentioned the angel that spoke. The other apparently didn't say anything. A man said this to them.

An angel said this. Luke tells us there were two angels, and John seems to agree also, as we'll see. Or as we did see.

Remember, when Mary got back, there were two angels sitting in the tomb. And then she paid little attention to them until she saw Jesus after that. But there apparently were two angels there.

The women saw them, received a message. The message is not identical. What we have

to assume is the angel said all of these things, and each gospel records a few of the statements, and we combine them to see all the things that were said.

They were told that Jesus rose from the dead, that he had predicted this before. They shouldn't be surprised. He's going to meet them in Galilee.

And they should go and inform the disciples that he intends to do so. Now what's strange, of course, is that John tells us that that very day he appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem, not in Galilee, although he said he'd meet them in Galilee. Also, eight days later, according to John, they were still in Jerusalem, it would appear, or maybe not.

Maybe they were back in Jerusalem, having gone to Galilee. Eh, couldn't make it back and forth that quick. So, I mean, it sounds a little difficult here because John has the appearances of Jesus in the first eight days taking place in Jerusalem.

Yet the angels told the women to tell the disciples that Jesus would meet them in Galilee. Okay? Well, meet them for what? We do know that he did meet them in Galilee later. There were other appearances that took place when they were in Galilee.

Whether they were supposed to go immediately to Galilee and meet him, but failed to because they didn't believe what the women said, that could be it. It could be that the women said, because we're told in Luke that the women's reports sounded like idle tales to the disciples. They didn't believe what the women said.

And it may be for that reason that Jesus appeared to them while they were still in Jerusalem, saying, hey, I told you to go to Galilee, but you wouldn't listen to these folks. You should have, if you'll notice what Mark 16 tells us. In Mark 16, in verse 14, it says, Afterward he appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table, and he rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

So, it sounds like Jesus, when he first appeared to them, which was Sunday evening, as we'll find out later, he rebuked them because they didn't listen to the report of the women. We should probably assume that the women did give the report, as the scripture indicates, that they should go to Galilee, and the disciples said, eh, you saw a ghost, you're dreaming, you're seeing things. And they didn't pay attention, and they didn't go.

And so, instead of meeting them in Galilee initially, he met them there to convince them. We'll talk about that a little later on. So far, we have the women in the tomb that have been told they run off to tell the disciples.

In the meantime, no doubt, Mary has already gotten to Peter and John, and they're already on their way back to the tomb. We read the account in John already. They're running ahead.

Mary's been running a lot already that morning. She's probably trailing behind a little slow. John's the faster runner, probably younger.

He gets to the tomb first, but he doesn't go into the tomb. Whether this is because he felt this awe and this sacredness about it, he didn't want to put his foot in it, or whether it was because it would make him unclean to go into a tomb, I don't know. But he stopped outside.

Peter, however, being the more impetuous, though slower, showed up as John stood there looking in. And Peter ran right by him and into the tomb. They saw no one there.

They didn't see angels. They didn't see Jesus. But they did see his grave clothes there.

And one little interesting point of detail that John gives us is that not only did they see his grave clothes, but John makes a point of saying in verse 7, and the handkerchief that had been around his head, not lined with the linen clothes, but folded together in a place by itself. Now this is an amazing thing. First of all, it proves that no grave robbery had taken place, in case anyone wants to suggest that.

The grave clothes were there. A person who wants to rob a grave is going to be in and out real fast. They're not going to take time to undress the corpse for any reason.

They're also not going to sit around and fold napkins. They're going to grab the wrapped up body and take it away and they'll dispense with the grave clothes another time. But here the grave clothes are present.

There's been no robbery. Furthermore, whoever moved the body was in no hurry. They took the time to fold up the napkin.

I mean, that's an incredible thing. Either the angel folded up the napkin that had been wrapped around his head, or Jesus did. And I think the latter is probably implied, but it's kind of an interesting thought.

Here, Jesus has been dead for three days. He rises from the dead and stands up and he realizes this is the beginning of a new creation. The church is beginning.

History has turned a corner. Nothing will ever be the same again. He has ransomed the human race.

He has conquered death and the devil once and for all. He sits and folds up a napkin and puts it neatly by, which very few people would ever have a chance to see. It just suggests that Jesus was tidy, doesn't it? I mean, it means that instead of just running out and showing himself to everybody, he said, Oh, I don't want to leave this place a mess.

Not going to everyone say I'm a bad housekeeper here. So he folds up this cloth that had been wrapped around his face. He took it off.

He didn't just drop it and say, Good riddance. He folded it up nicely and put it in his bed separate from the other clothes. I thought that would be a lesson for you men in the dorm.

So, okay. Now, it says after Peter went in and saw these things, that John ventured into the tomb also and were told, and John says this about himself, that when he saw these things, when he saw the grave clothes there, it says in verse 8, John 20 and verse 8, he saw and believed. Now, he didn't see the resurrected Christ and believe, but he saw the grave clothes and he believed.

Apparently, he didn't say anything and good old John, he always points himself out as one who's ahead of the other because the other disciples had to get rebuked because they didn't believe. But he must have been the one who was not subject to that rebuke. He was the disciple that Jesus loved.

He's the only one that knew that Judas was the one who would betray him at the table there. I mean, John's the one who was privy to all this stuff. But John was ahead of the others.

He believed that Jesus rose from the dead, apparently, though he either kept it to himself or was unable to convince the other apostles that he was correct about this. Then Peter and John go away scratching their heads. Then John's gospel tells us, we read it already, Mary shows up trailing behind him.

Now, she's never been in the tomb yet. She had run away, seen it in the distance before. The women are gone.

Peter and John are gone. Mary comes to the tomb and she stepped down and looked into the tomb, verse 11 says. And verse 12 says she saw two angels in white sitting.

That's agreeable with Luke. There were supposed to be two angels there, although they must not have been there when Peter and John were there. Now, this can't be a contradiction.

You know, someone says, well, one writer thinks there were angels there and another one thinks there were no angels there. No, it's the same writer who records that Peter and John had just been in the tomb and hadn't seen any angels. Mary gets there and sees them.

Obviously, what's going on here is the angels are appearing and disappearing just like Jesus himself did on these occasions. So here's the angels visible to Mary. And they were sitting at this point on the slab where the body had been.

And they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? And she said, Because they've taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him. So that was her

assumption from the beginning. So that's what she had told the disciples when she first went to them in verse 2. Now, the angels did not speak any further to her as far as we know.

They had given the message, the Easter message to the other women, but they didn't give it to Mary. Perhaps because it was Jesus' desire to give it to her himself. So she turned from them and she saw Jesus there.

But she didn't know it was Jesus. Now, usually the way that this is explained is because she was weeping. Her eyes were full of tears.

Her vision was kind of hazy and so forth. And she just saw this kind of vague figure of a man there and she figured, oh, that must be the gardener here. There's a garden to whom we're told elsewhere.

And so, he must be the gardener here. Maybe he moved the body. Maybe he was in the way.

But the fact that she didn't recognize him might not be due to the tears in her eyes. Even if I had tears in my eyes, I think I'd recognize my wife if I was up reasonably close. And I think that there are a number of indicators in the resurrection accounts that Jesus looked different after his resurrection.

One of those indicators is possibly this one. Mary, one of his admirers, didn't recognize him. She didn't recognize him until she heard his voice.

Another indicator is that the two men on the road to Emmaus, whose story we have yet to consider, they had known Jesus previously, but they didn't recognize him as he walked for several miles along the road talking with them. And they, in fact, never came to recognize him until he broke bread in their house. When he broke bread, they recognized him and then he vanished.

Why didn't they recognize him sooner? Likewise, in John 21, which we'll have to study next time, not this time, Jesus met with, I think, seven of the disciples, seven of the apostles, at the side of the Sea of Galilee and had breakfast with them. And there's this strange mention there. It says, But none of them dared ask him who he was, for they all knew it was the Lord.

Isn't that a strange statement? None of them dared to ask him who he was? Doesn't that kind of sound like they wanted to ask him, but they didn't dare? They were kind of curious, but they knew. They knew, but they didn't know. You know, they knew it was the Lord, but they weren't sure and they wished they could ask, but they were afraid to ask because they really knew it was him.

You know, I mean, why would they even think of asking, Are you Jesus? It may be that

Jesus, in his resurrection appearance, did not look exactly the same. No, he had the scars in his hands and his side to prove that it was the same guy. And he was able to speak to them things that were personal that guaranteed that it was the same Jesus.

But in his resurrection body, he may not have looked quite the same. He was, after all, quite disfigured in the treatment he received prior to his crucifixion. His face was disfigured.

It's possible that in the reconstruction of his body, the miraculous glorification of his body, that not all his features were the same as the original. I don't know. In any case, Mary didn't recognize him initially, whether it was because of tears in her eyes or he was too far in the distance, it was foggy, or whether it was that he looked different.

I think the last suggestion would have some support from these other accounts. Okay? So she followed him to the garden and said, Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've laid him. I'll take him away.

There's a woman who's dedicated to seeing that he gets a decent burial, not just thrown out into the street as a criminal. She's going to carry his body away herself. And that would not be probably easy.

I imagine Jesus was not a small man given the fact he was a carpenter. And that's a fairly intimidating guy to some of the crowds. Jesus said to her, Mary, now, the men who had met him on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize him until he broke bread.

That was perhaps a familiar act. They recognized him in a characteristic action of his. He had broken bread to feed the multitudes before.

He'd broken bread at the Last Supper. And perhaps there's something about that act that, you know, they knew it was him. Likewise, in John 21, the seven disciples were out in a boat fishing and hadn't gotten anything.

Jesus was on the shore, but they didn't recognize him. That may have been because of the distance. But he called out to them and said, children, have you caught anything? They said, nothing.

He said, well, throw your net on the other side of the boat. Which might sound like a stupid suggestion. You know, all the fish are over on this side of the boat.

You know, I saw a cartoon. Where was that? There's a fishing cartoon. I'm not into fishing, but I thought my son would appreciate it.

But it's a cartoon of two guys sitting in a boat with their fishing poles on their lines down. And there's this corridor directly under the boat all the way to the bottom where there's no fish. And there's these crowds of fish on either side of this corridor.

And the guy says, ah, let's take off, there's no fish around here. And there's this empty corridor with no fish where their hooks are. But multitudes of fish on either side, about a foot on either side.

And it's a joke, but it's really literally, it's literally the way it was when the apostles were fishing. He said, no, down the other side of the boat. Yeah, sure, there's not a single fish over on this side of the boat.

And there's this great multitude of fish just kind of hanging out over here, you know. And they thought, oh, well, whatever. And so they put in the net, and they were amazed to catch this huge catch of fish.

And John, at that point, said, it's the Lord. Now, how did he know at that moment that it was the Lord? Because he'd seen Jesus do that before. That's what Jesus did on the occasion when John the fisherman had been called from his net.

He had given him a miraculous catch of fish. So, I think some of these people didn't recognize Jesus until he said some characteristic thing that they'd heard him say many times or done some characteristic act that just kind of was his signature with them. And here he says to Mary, Mary.

Now, it's possible that there was nothing in his tone that was special. Some people try to postulate maybe romantically or something. You know, there's this special tenderness with which she was accustomed to hearing him.