

Reliability of the Resurrection Witnesses (The Easter Challenge)

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Background

If the Resurrection is to be established based on the testimony of the witnesses, then the reliability of the witnesses must be established first. The reliability of Luke as a witness can be substantiated in the numerous historical details that he gives in his gospel account. While skeptics have often attacked Luke, Sir William Ramsay has documented the reliability of Luke's testimony in his book, "St. Paul the Traveler." Ramsay states his objective, "... by stating in the following chapters reasons for placing the author of Acts among the historians of the first rank."^[1] From this basis, if it can be demonstrated that the other witnesses agree with Luke, then the reliability of the witnesses can be established.

The Problem

The skeptic argues that the testimonies of the various witnesses (as presented in the four gospel accounts) contradict one such that they cannot be reconciled, and therefore their testimony must be rendered invalid. Farrell Till, in "The Skeptical Review"^[2] argues that there are at least four major details in the testimonies including:

1. They differ on the time:

Matthew	28:1	"as it began to dawn "
Mark	16:2	"Very early in the morning, ...when the sun had risen."
Luke	24:1	"very early in the morning"
John	20:1	"while it was yet dark"

2. They differ on who went:

Matthew	28:1	"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary"
Mark	16:1	"Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome"
Luke	24:10	"Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them,"
John	20:1	"Mary Magdalene"

3. What happened at the tomb:

Farrell Till argues: "After the women arrived at the tomb, Matthew said that a "great earthquake" occurred and "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it" ([Matthew 28:2](#)). Mark, Luke, and John, however, disagreed. Mark said that the women found the stone already rolled away when they arrived at the tomb ([Mark 16:2](#)). Luke agreed with Mark and said that the stone was "rolled away from the tomb" when the women arrived ([Luke 24:2](#)), and John said that the stone had been "taken away from the tomb" when Mary Magdalene arrived ([John 20:1](#)). So who was right? Matthew or the other three? It simply could not have been that the stone was both in place and rolled away too when the women came to the tomb? Our rule of evidence demands one of two conclusions: Matthew was right and the other three were wrong, or the other three were right and Matthew was wrong. Both versions of the story cannot be right."

4. Confused about Mary's Run

Farrell Till argues "John was the one who chose to mention only the presence of Mary Magdalene at the tomb, and he said that Mary, upon seeing the stone taken away from the tomb, ran and told Simon Peter and "the other disciple" ([John 20:2](#)). She did this before seeing the angels, because it wasn't until after she had returned to the tomb that she saw the angels ([John 20:11-13](#)). So when John's Mary ran to Peter and the other disciples, did she run with the "great joy" that Matthew mentioned? And did she tell the disciples "all these things" that Luke said the angels had told them? Apparently no, according to John's story! When John's Mary found the disciples, she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him" ([John 20:2](#)). Obviously, there was no "joy" in what she was saying here. She was quite distressed."

The Reconciliation

First, it must be acknowledged that witnesses will often leave out certain detail in giving the account. This does not necessarily indicate that the detail omitted did not occur, but rather indicates what is perceived as "important", or "relevant" to the information being related. It should also be observed that witnesses often place differing importance on different details. For Matthew, it is important that the reader understand how the stone came to be rolled back when the women arrive, and that the women saw the angel and the empty tomb. For Mark, it was important to note that it was to Mary Magdalene that Jesus appeared first. For Luke, it was important to record that the angel reminded the women of the words of Jesus that he would rise on the third day. For John, it was important to record the actions of Mary Magdalene, and he gives the account entirely from her perspective.

Further, it should be noted that when witnesses record who was present, they often place differing importance on who was there. Some witnesses will only mention the prominent ones, some will mention prominent names, but note that others also were there. These are not necessarily contradictions, but are only required to be contradictions in cases where one witness says that certain ones were the only ones present (or in other words states the names or numbers in an exclusive manner, indicating that others were definitely not present).

The Time

Each of the statements "very early", "yet dark", "began to dawn" are equivalent, and the only difficulty is therefore the statement of Mark "when the sun had risen". Being yet dark only requires that the full brightness of the morning had not been reached by the complete rising of the sun above the horizon. The statement (KJV: "sun had risen", NIV: "just after sunrise,", NRSV: "when the sun had risen,) only requires that the sun had risen enough to provide light and does not require a full rising above the horizon. "Sunrise" is defined as the appearance of the sun above the eastern horizon, with the phrase "at sunrise" meaning the very beginning of the rising of the sun. All that is required of the phrase "sun had risen" is that the sun had begun its appearance, not that it had completed its full appearance. This is in harmony with the other writers in that it was "very early", "yet dawn" (the time when daylight begins), after sunrise had begun ("sun had risen"), but "yet dark" (i.e. not full daylight yet).

Who Was There?

As stated above, the different witnesses place differing importance on declaring those who were there at the tomb. Since none of the accounts indicate exclusivity (i.e. by using the word "only"), there is not a contradiction. The fullest reckoning is given by Luke who says "Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, ..." The other witnesses list subsets of this with Mark listing Salome (included with the "other women" of Luke). John focuses on Mary Magdalene who first saw Jesus. He does not indicate that only Mary was there, but focuses on her storyline. Leaving out the detail of what the other women saw does not indicate contradiction, but only an indication of what the writer thought

important to convey.

What Happened at The Tomb?

Matthew is the only writer to mention how the stone came to be rolled away from the tomb. The inclusion of this account is not necessarily to provide a chronological account, but rather the context requires it to be an explanatory insertion to account for how the women came to see the stone rolled away. If, for instance, they had witnessed the rolling back of the stone (as Farrell Till states), they would have no doubt witnessed the coming forth of Jesus as well. This clearly is not the intention of Matthew to state, for he records the women being told of the angel what had happened (something nonsensical if they had witnessed Jesus coming forth). The context then is that Matthew is explaining how the stone came to be rolled away when the women came to the tomb.

What About Mary's Run

To reconcile the accounts, it must first be recognized that both the account by Mark (“...He appeared first to Mary Magdalene ...”), and that of John (who tells the storyline of Mary Magdalene alone) requires that Mary Magdalene be separated from the other women between the arrival at the tomb and the time that the other women entered the tomb. It is reasonable to believe that at the point at which the women arrived and saw the stone removed from the entrance, Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter. The other women, knowing that someone was going to tell Peter, remained and investigated, and after seeing and hearing the angels, departed to tell the disciples. After departing perhaps by a different path, such that they did not see Mary returning, Mary returns with Peter and John. After the inspection of the tomb, Peter and John depart. At this point Mary sees the angel, and sees Jesus, and then as the others are going to see the disciples, Jesus meets them as well. At this point the entire group is going to tell the disciples (although Mary is still separated from the group). The primary group may have been traveling slower. They may have been carrying the spices weighing several tens of pounds. It would be reasonable to expect them to carry the spices away since they were not needed at the tomb.

From this description it can be seen that Mary leaves the tomb twice – once in sorrow, and once in joy. When Matthew records that “they” went from the tomb with “fear and great joy”, he is referring to the group of women who entered the tomb together (the group after Mary had left to get Peter). When Mark says that “And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” he is recording that they told no one other than the disciples. This would be natural since the body was gone, and it was to be expected that they having been present at the tomb might be accused of stealing the body.

How Many Angels?

Luke records that there were two angels (men in shining garments) present, while Matthew and Mark only records one. Luke only records one as speaking, and Matthew and Mark only mention the one that spoke. It is common to only mention the prominent one where more than one is present. One may speak of an important social event and mention that the governor was there. Not that he only was there, but that he is mentioned due to prominence.

Why Didn't Mary Recognize Jesus?

Some have questioned John's account for stating that Mary did not recognize Jesus when she saw him. However, it is stated that Mary was crying and perhaps so profusely such that her vision was blurred. It could also have been that his appearance was altered by dress combined with her knowledge that he died (and like the disciples being a great deal skeptical), that caused her (based on the circumstances) to think him as a gardener.

Who Went To The Tomb To Check, and When?

Luke records Peter going to the Tomb after the women (who had been at the tomb) had come and reported

to the disciples. However, from the context the writer begins in verse 10 to provide a summary of how the disciples did not believe even after being witnessed to by the group of women. His statement about Peter is listed after the statement of disbelief to point out that Peter (who had denied Jesus) did go to the tomb and confirmed the account of the women. The nature of a summary is such that the order is not necessarily given, but the final outcome. The women did testify to the disciples, and Peter did go to the tomb, but not necessarily in that order. From the reconciliation provided above, it is evident that Peter went to the tomb after Mary Magdalene came to him and before he had heard from the other women. However, this does not change the truth of the statement that all of the women (including Mary Magdalene) came to the disciples and testified about the empty tomb and that Jesus had risen, and further that the disciples did not believe, but that Peter did go and witness the empty tomb himself.

In Summary

The accounts can be reconciled, and the witnesses are credible. There are no indications of collusion, and the testimony is that which would be expected when the story is told by different witnesses, with each one stressing certain details, but in no case contradicting the other.

The Accounts in parallel

The following table provides the text of each of the accounts with the appropriate events in the same rows:

	Matthew 28	Mark 16	Luke 24	John 20
When	Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.	Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. {2} Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. {3} And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" {4} But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away; for it was very large.	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. {2} But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.	Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
More Detail	<p>ONLY JOHN 20: {2} Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to 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." {3} Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. {4} So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. {5} And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. {6} Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, {7} and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. {8} Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. {9} For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. {10} Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.</p>			

Background	<p>{2} And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. {3} His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. {4} And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.</p>			
Angel at The Tomb	<p>{5} But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. {6} "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. {7} "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."</p>	<p>{5} And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. {6} But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. {7} "But go, tell His disciples; and Peter; that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."</p>	<p>{3} Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. {4} And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. {5} 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? {6} "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, {7} "saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" {8} And they remembered His words.</p>	<p>{11} But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. {12} 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. {13} Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."</p>
Mary Sees Jesus				<p>{14} Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. {15} 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." {16} Jesus said to her,</p>

				"Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). {17} Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to 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.'"
What They Did	{8} So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. {9} And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. {10} Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."	{8} So 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.	{9} Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.	{18} Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.
Summary		{9} Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. {10} She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. {11} And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.	{10} It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. {11} And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. {12} But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.	

Reconciling the Resurrection Accounts

On the first day of the week^{MtMkLkJo}, the women began their journey to the tomb at first light while it was yet dark^{Jo 20:1} bringing spices and fragrant oils^{Lk 23:56} which they had prepared. Among the women from Galilee^{Lk 23:55} was Mary Magdalene^(MtMkJ), Mary the mother of James^(MtMk), and Salome^(Mk). They had

watched when Jesus was laid in the tomb [Lk 23:55](#) and therefore knew where they were going.

They arrived at the tomb after sunrise [Mk 16:2](#) – that is after the sun had first begun to appear over the horizon. They were thus not mistaken about which tomb they came to, for while they had set out on their journey while it was yet dark, when they arrived there was enough light to be certain where they were. They were concerned about how they would get into the tomb since the stone which sealed it was heavy [Mk 16:3](#), but when they arrived they saw that it was already rolled away ^{MkLkJo}.

The stone was rolled away because [\[3\]](#) during the night there was an earthquake as an angel of God came from heaven and rolled back the stone [Mt 28:2](#). The guards witnessed this and were petrified [Mt 28:4](#) with fear. When it was over, the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that happened, and they were bribed to say that the disciples came and stole away the body of Jesus [Mt 28:11-15](#).

So it was, that when the women arrived at the tomb, the stone had been rolled back ^{MkLkJo} and the soldiers were gone. As soon as they realized that the tomb was open and apparently empty, Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter what had happened [\[4\]](#). She was distraught and reported to Peter and John (the “other disciple”, [John 20:2](#)) that, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” [John 20:2](#)

Meanwhile the other women with the spices who had remained at the tomb, went inside and as they were trying to understand what had happened, they saw two angels who appeared as men [Lk 24:3](#). They said to the women, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” [Lk 24:5](#) “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here, but is risen!” [Mk 16:6](#) “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’” [Lk 24:6-7](#) The angel also said, “But go, tell His disciples; and Peter; that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him as He said to you.” [Mk 16:7](#) So, the women left the tomb quickly with fear and joy and ran to tell the disciples.

Meanwhile, since Mary Magdalene had informed Peter and John, they all three come to the tomb. They may have come by a different path since they did not meet the other women [\[5\]](#). Peter and John ran together to the tomb, but John arrived first. John looked into the tomb and saw it empty except for the linen cloths, but did not go in. Then Peter came and went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths and the handkerchief folded separately. John then followed Peter in and then they both left together. [Jo 20:3-10](#)

Mary, however, remained at the tomb weeping, and while weeping looked into the tomb. [Jo 20:11](#) She saw the two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. The angels said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” 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. [Jo 20:12-14](#) As she turned, her eyesight may have been blurred with tears. She may not have looked up, but just saw that someone was there. For some reason she did not realize who it was, and turned quickly back around. [\[6\]](#)

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!” There may have been something in the way he said her name, or the way in which someone while not recognizing another’s voice at first, but then does after a few words, but all of a sudden, she knew the voice! She turned and said to Him “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to 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 then left with

joy to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things to her. [John 20:13-18](#)

The other women are ahead of her along the pathway on the way to tell the disciples, and at this point Jesus met them saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held him by the feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." [Mt 28:9-10](#).

The women were afraid and so told no one along the way what had happened or what they had seen [Mk 16:18](#). So when they came into the city, they went to the disciples and told them what had happened. They told the story to all of the eleven [Lk 24:9](#). The story which the women told was not at first believed [Lk 24:11](#); [Mk 16:11](#).

So, in summary, Jesus appeared to all of the women (although to Mary Magdalene first [Mk 16:9](#), and then to the other women), they all saw the angels [Mt 28:5](#); [John 20:12](#), and they all went to tell the disciples [Lk 24:9](#); [John 20:18](#).

Jesus also appeared to two disciples as they walked into the country [Mk 16:12](#), and they came and told the disciples, but they did not believe it.

Jesus appeared to Peter [1 Cor 15:5](#) before the rest of the apostles and Peter must have then gathered the eleven together and told them what he had seen sometime before evening.

Two other disciples [\[7\]](#) were traveling to Emmaus (about seven miles from Jerusalem). One was named Cleopas, and the other is not named. These two had a conversation with Jesus and Jesus expounded to them the scriptures from Moses and including all of the prophets [Luke 24:27](#). When they reached the village where they were going it was toward evening and he went in to stay with them and broke bread with them. At that point they realized that it was Jesus and he vanished from their sight. So they returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples.

When they arrived from Emmaus [\[8\]](#) to tell the disciples that they had seen Jesus, they found the eleven gathered proclaiming that the Lord is risen indeed [Luke 24:34](#), and that he has appeared to Peter. They then told the disciples about their encounter with Jesus.

Now in the evening of that same day (the first day of the week), the disciples were gathered with the door shut for fear of the Jews, and Jesus appeared to them and said "Peace be with you". He showed them his hands and his side and the disciples were glad. Jesus said to them, "Peace to you! It was likely on this occasion [\[9\]](#) that Jesus berated them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe those who had seen Him [Mk 16:14](#), and told them to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. [Mk 16:16](#)." He said, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." He breathed on them and they received the Holy Spirit and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. [John 20:19-23](#) Thomas was not present [John 20:24](#), when Jesus appeared to them, but joined them afterward [\[10\]](#), and when he arrived he found them saying, "We have seen the Lord" His response was, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." [John 20:25](#)

The disciples had been instructed by Jesus prior to his arrest [Mt 26:32](#) that "...after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." The message given by the angel to the women was that Jesus "is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him, as he said to you" [Mt 28:7](#); [Mk 16:7](#)

After 8 days the disciples were again gathered together inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came and stood in their midst and said "Peace to you!" He then said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus replied, "Thomas, because you have seen me, you have

believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

In Galilee while some were fishing (Peter, Thomas, Nathanel, James and John, and two others) Jesus appeared to the eleven for the third time. After fishing all night and catching nothing they saw a man on the shore and he told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat to find fish. When they cast, they were not able to draw in the net because of the number of fish^{[John 21:1-6](#)}. John then declared that it was Jesus, and Peter plunged into the water to swim to land. Jesus then ate breakfast with them^{[John 21:7-14](#)}. This was the third time that he revealed himself to the disciples^{[John 21:14](#)}.

The disciples went into the mountain in Galilee which Jesus had appointed and Jesus instructed them there.^{[Mt 28:16-20](#)}

At the end of 40 days since the resurrection^[11], Jesus ascended into heaven^{[Acts 1:3](#)}. Jesus had returned from Galilee and gathered his disciples together at Bethany^{[Luke 24:50](#)} and instructed them to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Promise of the Father when they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.^{[Acts 1:5](#)} When he had spoken these words, while they watched, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight.

[1] Sir William Ramsay, "St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen" (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962, reprint of 1897 edition), Chapter 1, section 1.

[2] <http://www.infidels.org/library/magazines/tsr/1992/2/2maze92.html>

[3] The text in Matthew includes the explanation of how the stone came to be rolled back. Although the skeptic claims this as a contradiction by saying that the events of Matthew's account are strictly chronological (i.e. the women come to the tomb, the stone is then rolled back, and then the angel tells them that Jesus is risen), the text does not require it and the context would be reduced to nonsense since if the women had witnessed the stone being rolled back they would likely also have witnessed Jesus coming out of the tomb. However, the account is much like we would describe events. For example, in describing my ride home from work, I might say, "I got on I-4; an accident happened at the Kaley ramp that blocked two lanes delaying me by over an hour". We do not always relate things in chronological order, but often insert explanations – in this case the backup that delayed me was caused by an accident. I did not say when it occurred – whether before I got on I-4 or after – only that one occurred that caused the backup that was the focus of my explanation. In the case of resolving the testimony of multiple witnesses, this explanation of Matthew's account is reasonable and an ordinary method of communication.

[4] Although the text does not mention that Mary ran separately to get Peter, it is required by the accounts since Mary ran to tell Peter with sorrow (They have taken the body and we don't know where it is). If she had been with the other women, she would have seen the angel and would have known that Jesus had arisen and therefore her story would have been a story of joy. Reconciliation therefore requires that Mary separated herself from the others at this point. It would be normal for the others to remain and investigate, knowing that Peter would be told of the situation by Mary.

[5] If they had met, the women would have told them that Jesus had arisen from the dead. As it happened, Mary clearly did not know this at this point since when she arrived at the tomb, she was still weeping ([Jn 20:11](#))

[6] She apparently only turned her head or else turned her body, and took a quick glance and then turned back, since after recognizing Jesus' voice, she turned to Him ([John 20:16](#)) indicating that she was not turned toward him at this point.

[7] These were clearly not the same two as reported by [Mark 16:13](#), since in that case, they reported it to the disciples and were not believed. In the case in [Luke 24:13-35](#), since in this case two witnesses found the eleven gathered and already convinced about the resurrection.

[8] It appears that when Cleopas arrived it was before Thomas came, since the pair from Emmaus find the disciples proclaiming that Peter has seen the Lord. Therefore it was likely before Jesus appeared to them as a group (minus Thomas), since at that point they would have been saying "we" have seen the Lord. It says in [Luke 24:33](#) that the pair found the "eleven", but that could refer to either the group rather than a specific number. Previously, they had been called the "twelve" when referring to the group, but now with Judas dead, they would be the "eleven".

[9] [Mark 16:14](#) records that "afterward" (no specific timeframe) the "eleven" were gathered. Since Judas had hanged himself, they were now referred to as the "eleven" and the text does not require that all eleven be present in order to call them by that name. It makes sense that it was this occasion, since after his initial appearance, they were convinced ([Luke 24:34](#)).

[10] [Luke 24:33](#) says that the two witnesses on the road to Emmaus came and told the eleven.

[11] Although Mark says “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven...” – there is no time reference (e.g. immediately, that same day, etc.). So there is no conflict here where Mark says in summary fashion that Christ instructed his disciples and then was received into heaven.

