

foretold. The women then inform the Eleven and Peter himself went to the tomb to check if it was true.

John has Mary of Magdala finding the tomb empty and telling Peter and another disciple 'the one Jesus loved' who ran to the tomb to verify it. John next has **two** 'angels' and then Jesus appearing to Mary of Magdala at the tomb, with her initially thinking Jesus was the gardener.



Luke and John, then, both give **similar** versions where the women, or Mary of Magdala on her own, find the tomb empty, tell the disciples and the latter going to see for themselves.

Luke alone gives the story of Jesus' appearance to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus on the same day as the events at the tomb.. They are shown not to have recognised him for some time until they sat down for a meal and he broke bread. These disciples then return to Jerusalem and are recounting their experience to the others when Jesus appears to them, eats with them and explains everything to them about the nature of his death and resurrection.

John's Gospel records this **same appearance** to all the disciples, except Thomas, on the evening of the day of the resurrection. John tells that Jesus gave them the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive sins. He also records a further meeting 8 days later when Jesus shows 'doubting' Thomas his wounds.



Luke's Gospel ends with a description of Jesus' **ascension** at Bethany.

John's Gospel has an added section, where Jesus appears to Peter and several other disciples in Galilee by the Sea of Tiberias. The incident is famous for the three-fold questioning of Peter by Jesus 'do you love me' and the follow up 'feed my sheep' giving support for Peter as leader of the Christian community. It also has a curious incident where Jesus is talking to Peter about 'the disciple Jesus loves', and the author evidently wants to clear up a rumour in circulation in his community by explaining that Jesus did not say that that disciple would not die but 'I want him to stay behind until I come'.

Jesus in the Gospels

20. The Resurrection of Jesus



Questions

1. Why do you think there are differences in the resurrection accounts in the Gospels?
2. Why does Matthew place such emphasis on the guards at the tomb?
3. Is it significant that no disciple seems to believe the word of others about the resurrection until they see Jesus themselves?

For Reflection

Different Resurrection Traditions

All four gospels contain accounts of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, but there are differences in the detail that indicate different traditions and memories of that great event. There are also strong indications in the Gospels of Mark and John of additions being made to an original work.



Matthew's and Mark's Version

These authors describe how some women, who they presented earlier as being present at the crucifixion, came to Jesus' sepulchre towards dawn on the first day of the week (our Sunday). Matthew names two women, Mary of Magdala and the 'other' Mary; Mark adds Salome (the 'other' Mary of Matthew is probably the Mary, mother of James named in Mark). Matthew, because his account had earlier placed Roman guards on the tomb, has the women just 'visiting' the tomb but Mark makes it clear they have come to anoint Jesus' body and he has them discussing how they will be able to remove the great stone used to cover the entrance to the tomb..



Matthew, in his normal dramatic way, describes an earthquake and the coming of a dazzling angel who petrified the guards with fear and rolled away the stone. Mark states, however, that the women found the stone already rolled away. Matthew, continuing his concern to rebut what must have been a rumour in his community that the disciples had removed Jesus' body, portrays the guards as going to the chief priests, telling them what happened and being bribed to say that the disciples took Jesus during the night while they were asleep. This just would never have happened. Even if there were Roman guards on the tomb, it is almost impossible to believe their first concern was to tell the chief priests. Also, to admit they had been asleep while on duty would have led to their summary execution for dereliction of duty.

Both Matthew and Mark have **one** angel at the tomb, although Mark actually says 'a young man', who tells them that Jesus is not there, that he has risen just as he said, and that he had gone ahead **to Galilee**, and they were to tell the disciples so that they could go there to see him.



Matthew and Mark belong to the so-called **Galilee tradition** because that is where the subsequent meeting with the disciples was to take place. Now it is probable that Mark's Gospel ended at this point, but a sentence has been added that states the women were so frightened that they said nothing to anyone. A further section also came to be added and accepted as canonical although it does not appear in some of the most influential earliest manuscripts. This section provides a summary of Jesus' appearances, to Mary of Magdala, to two others (Luke's Emmaus appearance), and finally to the Eleven. The section is strong in its criticism of those who failed to believe Jesus had risen, it instructs the disciples to proclaim the Gospel 'to all creation', and it concludes (following Luke) with Jesus being taken up to Heaven.

Matthew's Gospel extends the drama at the tomb with Jesus appearing to the women. He reiterates the instruction to the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. There, on a mountain, a recurring motif in Matthew's Gospel, they meet Jesus. Matthew records that some, surprisingly, hesitated to fall down before Jesus. Jesus then commanded them to make disciples of all nations, to baptise people and to teach them to observe all that he taught them.

Luke' and John's Version

Luke and John belong to the '**Judean tradition**' where Jesus' appearances are in Judea. Luke has several women going to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus' body, amongst them being Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Mary the mother of James. John only records Mary of Magdala going to the tomb. Luke's account has **two** men appearing to the women who are told that Jesus had risen as he had