

## Lesson 59

Time –4/7/30 AD, 18 Nisan

### The Resurrection and The Visit by the Women

The accounts of the four Gospels of the visit of the different women to the tomb of Christ on Sunday morning vary widely. However, they only vary in the matter of perspective. A careful reconciliation of the four accounts gives us the full picture, which I will try to summarize below. Then we can look at a chronological view of when the different visits in the different Gospel accounts occurred.

#### *The Summary*

Early on Sunday, just as dawn was beginning to break, there were two groups of women who were followers of Jesus headed toward the Tomb.<sup>1</sup> The first group included Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of Jesus), and Salome (Mary's sister). The second group probably started that morning from a different place than the first. They included Joanna, whose husband was Cuza, the manager of Herod Antipas' household. This group included at least two others. The first group of three women had also been at the foot of the cross when Jesus was dying. They had also been at the tomb when Jesus' body was buried. They were the first to arrive at the tomb that Sunday morning. They probably had to use the very route out of the city through the Tower Gate to Golgotha that Jesus had used. They then would have made their way slightly down the steep hillside to the area in the small park (garden) where the tomb faced the Temple and the rising sun (see map on page 3). They wouldn't have known beforehand that the tomb was guarded by soldiers to prevent any such visit. However, before they arrived, there was a violent earthquake, and an angel of the Lord came down and rolled away the stone. Remember, the soldiers were stationed there precisely to prevent any tampering with the body. However, as we shall see, the soldiers were helpless to interfere with the angel. They also seemed to have been still petrified with fear and also helpless to interfere with this group of women. As soon as Mary Magdalene saw that the stone was rolled away, she took off running to tell the eleven disciples that the Tomb had been opened. The angel who had rolled away the stone which had sealed the tomb was still sitting on it. It was then that he spoke to

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<sup>1</sup> *Some of the women who followed Jesus were described in Luke 8:1-3 "After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.*

Jesus' mother Mary and her sister Salome (the mother of John the Apostle) and told them to tell Jesus' disciples that He had risen. The women went into the tomb and found that it was empty and spoke to another angel who confirmed what the first angel had said. Then Mary and her sister Salome left. Meanwhile Mary Magdalene was running to tell the disciples. About that time the second group of women arrived at the Tomb without having encountered Mary and her sister. When they looked in the empty Tomb, two angels suddenly appeared beside them and announced Jesus' resurrection. Then this second group of women left. Then John and Peter arrived, one after the other. They had already been alerted about the empty Tomb by Mary Magdalene. John, who arrived first, only looked into the Tomb. He saw that it was empty. Then Peter arrived and went all the way into the Tomb. He was then followed by John. All they saw was the empty grave clothes lying there. Then they left the garden. Finally, Mary Magdalene arrived back at the Tomb. She went into the Tomb, where she saw two angels sitting at either end of the bench where Jesus' body had been lying. She then turned back around in the dark tomb toward the entrance and saw the figure of Jesus against the rising morning sun.

### ***The Scriptures about the Morning of the Resurrection***

To refresh our minds from the previous lesson, some of the women who normally followed Jesus and His disciples had also followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the Tomb where they buried Him after He was taken down off of the Cross.

Luke 23:54-56 "It was Preparation Day (*Wednesday, the day Jesus was Crucified*), and the Sabbath (*Thursday, the Special Sabbath of the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread*) was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes (*Friday*). But they rested on the Sabbath (*the weekly Saturday Sabbath that followed*) in obedience to the commandment."

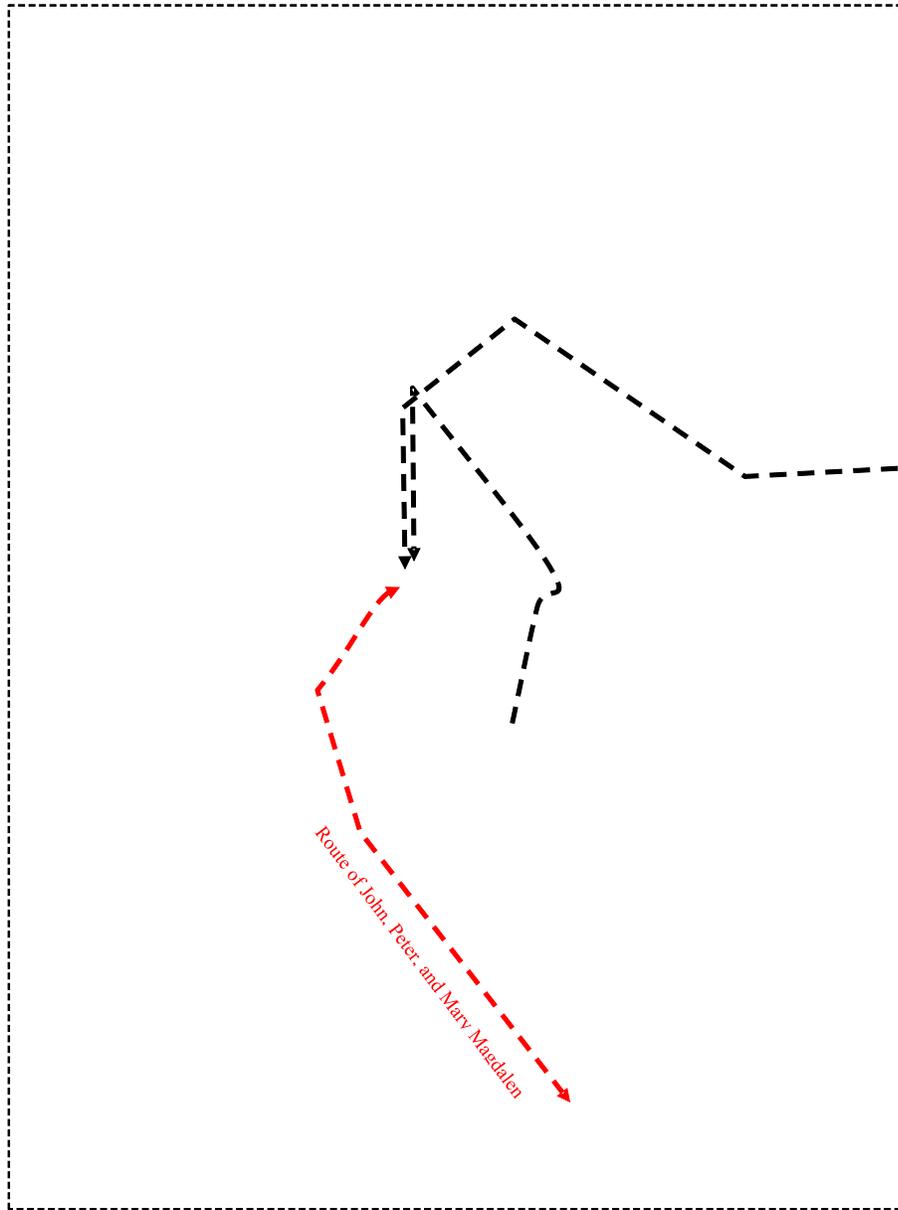
The accounts of the women who visited the tomb, and the angels that appeared on this morning of this first post-resurrection visit to the tomb, at first sight, seem to present a discrepancy. However, this discrepancy disappears if we realize that the women arrived in two different groups. This was probably because they were scattered inside and outside of Jerusalem. The eleven surviving disciples were evidently all in one house inside Jerusalem, but the rest of the disciples numbered well over a hundred and would have had to find shelter where they could. They probably avoided the Garden of Gethsemane where they had last been seen by the party that had arrested Jesus.

The first group of women consisted of three. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Salome, Mary's sister and the mother of James and John. These had all been at the foot of the cross during the crucifixion. Only Mark's account names all three. Matthew's account named Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother Mary. John's account omitted both Jesus' mother, and typically for John, his own mother Salome.<sup>2</sup> John only mentioned Mary Magdalene.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *In his Gospel, John also never gives his name or the name of his brother James. He will only go as far as to identify himself and his brother as "the sons of Zebedee."*

<sup>3</sup> *Although John only recorded the early presence of Mary Magdalene, her statement to John and Peter when she ran to them in John 20:2 and said "we know not" certainly implied that she had been only one of several women at the Tomb.*



***Different Possible Routes to the Tomb by Mary and Mary Magdalene, the Other Women, and John and Peter***

***Red Dashes – Path of Mary Magdalene, Black Dashes- Other Woman***

The second group, whose visit is recorded in Luke, consisted of some of the other women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. They may have started from the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany on the other side of the Mount of Olives.

Here we will begin to look at the various Gospel accounts, beginning with Matthew and Mark.

**Matthew 28:1** **After the Sabbath Sabbaths (plural), at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.**

**Mark 16:1** **When the Sabbath (the special Sabbath on Thursday) was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James,<sup>4</sup> and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.**

The day this occurred was described in two ways. In Matthew it was described as “after the Sabbaths.” In Mark it was subsequently described as “the first of the week.” In Luke, which we will see later, it was described as “the first of the week.” In John, which we will see later, it was also described as “the first of the week.” The first day of the week on the Jewish Calendar is what we call “Sunday.”

In Matthew's account he told how the women went to the tomb “after the Sabbaths.” In Matthew the word which the NIV and almost every other translation renders as the singular “Sabbath” should be the plural “Sabbaths.” Both the Textus Receptus and Codex Sinaiticus have σαββάτων {sä'b-bä-tōn} which is the genitive **plural**. This only causes a problem if Jesus was crucified on Friday in 33 AD. As we saw last time, He was crucified on Wednesday in 30 AD. That year there were two Sabbaths between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection Sunday. They were the Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on Thursday, and the weekly Sabbath on Saturday.

Mark on the other hand described how “when the Sabbath was over” they bought spices to take to the Tomb. The Sabbath Mark was talking about was the special Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They had to have bought and prepared those spices on the Friday after the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They then had to have waited for the weekly Sabbath of the next day to pass before they could arrive at the break of day the next day, which was Sunday. You might also notice that if Jesus was crucified on Friday, it would have been impossible to buy or prepare spices the next day because of the ban on commerce. There had to have been at least one non-Sabbath day between the Cross and the Sunday Resurrection.

The fact that the women brought spices to preserve his dead body indicated that the women were not expecting Jesus' resurrection. I have always liked to think that Jesus' mother Mary didn't have to buy any spices. I like to think that she brought the myrrh that had been given to her 33 years before by the Magi.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *This was Mary the mother of Jesus. Of her four other sons (James, Joseph / Joses, Jude, and Simon) James would have been the one most familiar to the people of Antioch to whom Mark first wrote his Gospel. James was the leader of the Church in Jerusalem when Mark wrote his Gospel.*

**Mark 16:2-3** Very early on the first *day* of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>6</sup> and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

**John 20:1a** Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb

We know that both Mary and Mary Magdalene had seen Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus close the tomb three days before when they had buried him (Matthew 27:61, Mark 15:46-47, Luke 23:55). However, they don't seem to have thought of that barrier until just before they arrived at the tomb. They also didn't know that the High Priests had also sealed the Tomb. The Greek word for “seal” there was σφραγίζω {sfrag-id'-zo} which according to Strong's can mean to make secure, or to seal up. Possibly the stone had been cemented in place.

**Matthew 28:2** There was a violent earthquake,<sup>7</sup> for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

Evidently, as the women were on the way, there was a yet another violent earthquake like the one three days before and an angel arrived to roll away the stone. For the angel the sealed stone had been no problem.

**Matthew 28:3-4** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The accounts state that when the women arrived, the stone had already been rolled away. This means that the only humans that saw this sight were the Roman guards. In Matthew 27:65-66 we saw that the Roman guards had been handed over to the authority of the High Priests. We weren't told how many there were. Considering that Jesus had over a hundred full time disciples and that He had been welcomed into the city by tens of thousands, I have to believe the number was larger than the two or three pictured in most movies. The detachment would have been at least as many as eight, the size of a Roman contubernium.<sup>8</sup> They would have split

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<sup>5</sup> *Matthew 2:11*

<sup>6</sup> *Remember that the tomb faced east toward the Temple and Jerusalem on the northern ridge of Mt. Zion. If you knew where to look, the elevated tomb with the stone rolled away would have been visible from both the Temple and most of the city.*

<sup>7</sup> *This probably occurred before the women arrived at the tomb.*

the 3 days into eight watches a day of three hours each. Perhaps some of them were among the twelve soldiers who had guarded the three prisoners on the way to execution. I believe this detailed account of how the soldiers saw an angel roll away the stone and then sit on it must have been related to Matthew later by one or more of these same guards. That witnessing guard had probably been later brought to faith by all he had seen and heard.<sup>9</sup> This account seems to indicate that, at least at first, the soldiers were paralyzed with fear. We aren't told how long they lingered on the scene or whether they heard what the angel told the women, but it doesn't say they fled.

**Mark 16:4** **But when they (*the women*) looked up,<sup>10</sup> they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.**

**John 20:1b** **and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.<sup>11</sup>**

The LORD had taken care of the stone by sending an angel to roll away the stone. Although his name isn't given, I can't help wondering whether it was Gabriel who had appeared to Mary to announce that she would bear the Messiah (Luke 1:26).

**John 20:2** **So she (*Mary Magdalene*) came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved,<sup>12</sup> and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"**

It was evidently at this point that Mary Magdalene took off running to get Peter and John. We can deduce this because she didn't have any of the other information that was given to the two women who stayed behind. We will rejoin the story of Mary Magdalene in just a little while.

**Matthew 28:5-7** **The angel (*who looked like lightning and could evidently be seen and heard by the soldiers*) said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place**

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<sup>8</sup> *A contubernium was eight in number. It was the number who normally lived in a Roman military tent. A contubernium was also usually supplied with one mule and other support equipment for the men and the tent.*

<sup>9</sup> *We know that someone, probably one of these same guards, wound up revealing the story of how the guards were secretly bribed not to tell what they saw (Matthew 28:11-15).*

<sup>10</sup> *This would confirm the location "up" on the hillside.*

<sup>11</sup> *John's account skipped by the details listed in the other Gospels because his focus was to get to **his** visit to the tomb.*

<sup>12</sup> *John refers to himself often as "the disciple Jesus loved." He knew that the basis of his whole life was the knowledge of that fact. (I John 4:10).*

**where he lay.<sup>13</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now Behold<sup>14</sup> I have told you.”**

First, the angel who had rolled away the stone addressed the women who had been left behind, Jesus’ mother Mary and His aunt Salome. He gave them a message to tell the rest of Jesus’ disciples, both men and women. Jesus had promised to go before them into Galilee just a few nights before on the night He was arrested.

Matthew 26:31-32 “Then Jesus told them, ‘This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

Mark 14:27-28 “‘You will all fall away,’ Jesus told them, ‘for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

Mark 16:5 **As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.**

The descriptions of the angels vary from one Gospel to another. Some said the angels looked like lightning. Others didn’t mention that aspect at all but said they appeared as dressed in white. Remember that Mary Magdalene (John 20:6-12) would later look into the tomb where Peter and John had just been and had seen angels that Peter and John had not seen. It seems that angels can be visible to some people and not visible to others. They also may appear differently to different people depending on the message their appearance is intended to send. To the soldiers they looked like lightning probably because the soldiers were intended to be frightened so that they wouldn’t interfere.

Mark 16:6-7 **“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene,<sup>15</sup> who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”**

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<sup>13</sup> This was spoken before the women entered the tomb.

<sup>14</sup> The Greek word here is ἰδοὺ {id-oo’}. It is translated “behold” or “see” by the NKJV, ESV, NASB, Amplified, RSV, Darby, and HNV. It is translated “lo” by the KJV, RSV, ASV, YLT, and WEB. It is translated “listen” by the CSB, and NE. It is translated “remember” by the NLT. Basically, it instructs the hearer to concentrate on what was being said because it is important.

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting remember that both women were from Nazareth.

Not persuaded by the first angel that Jesus' body was no longer there, the women entered the Tomb. There they saw another angel who appeared to them in the unafrightening guise of a young man dressed in a white robe. He showed them that the body was gone and repeated the message of the previous angel.

**Matthew 28:8** **So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.**

**Mark 16:8** **Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.**

Mary and her sister left the tomb to tell the rest of Jesus' disciples. They had mixed feelings of fear and joy. That is an interesting reaction that tells us something about the human condition.

**Luke 24:1** **On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.**

This takes up the journey of the other women who had evidently started for the tomb early, but still arrived after Mary, her sister, and Mary Magdalene. The fact that these others brought spices indicated that these women also weren't expecting Jesus' resurrection, or they would not have come with spices to anoint His dead body.

**Luke 24:2** **They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,**

Like Jesus' mother Mary and the other two, the second found the stone rolled away from the Tomb. However, the first angel, who had rolled away the stone, was no longer evident.

**Luke 24:3** **but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.**

They went into the tomb but didn't find Jesus' body there. They probably came back out of the tomb. Such tombs weren't big enough for more than two or three people at a time.

**Luke 24:4** **While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.**

Suddenly the angels became visible standing beside them in the tomb. These two angels had both assumed the frightening aspect of lightning of the angel who had first rolled away the stone.

**Luke 24:5-6a** In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!

The women were awed by the appearance of the two angels, who had the appearance of men. They asked why the women were looking for Jesus in a tomb. Jesus had told His disciples that He would be raised by this day.

**Luke 24:6b-8** Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and ~~on~~ since the third day <sup>16</sup> be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words.<sup>17</sup>

At last, some of Jesus’ disciples finally believed what Jesus had told them for most of the last year. This also tells us that these women were party to Jesus’ private discussions with His close disciples. After this the second group of women hurried back toward Jerusalem.

About that time, Mary Magdalene, who had run all the way, had arrived back at the place John and Peter were staying and told them about the open Tomb. That started John and Peter running toward the tomb, followed at a distance by an already exhausted Mary Magdalene.

**John 20:3-4** So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

Evidently, by the time John and Peter had gotten to the Tomb, the second group of women had left the site. Depending on where one was starting, there were probably at least three routes that the three parties might have taken to the Tomb. The women had probably started that morning from different places. Some of them might have been encamped on the Mt. of Olives where many of the out-of-town pilgrims camped. Some of them with means or relatives might have stayed in the Upper City. Some of them may have found refuge close to the eleven in the Lower City. Some of them might have stayed with Mary and Martha at Bethany. The fact that they started from different places was probably the reason that there were two parties. According to tradition, Peter and John and the rest of the remaining eleven disciples were staying in the Lower City. They would have approached the Tomb from the south. That would have been why

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<sup>16</sup> As we studied in the last section of the last lesson, there is no preposition “on” here. However, the words “the third day” are in the dative case and a preposition is implied. In this case the preposition “since.”

<sup>17</sup> This prediction was recorded 9 times: Matthew 12:40, Matthew 16:21, Matthew 17:22-23, Matthew 20:18-19, Mark 8:31, Mark 9:31, Mark 10:33-34, Luke 9:22, and Luke 18:31-33.

Peter and John didn't run into either of the groups of women who were coming back to Jerusalem.

Some have said that John's superior speed demonstrated that he was younger. Of course, John had already seen the Tomb three days earlier. He knew exactly where it was. Considering the distance (over a mile), and the uphill grade, I expect that he arrived at least a minute or two ahead of Peter.

**John 20:5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.**

John didn't go into the Tomb. He did see that there was no body, but that the linen strips which had encased Jesus' body in the spices were lying there empty. This poses the unanswerable question: When was Jesus' old body replaced by His resurrection body? We know that at least His soul was in Paradise while His dead body was still on the Cross and while it was being put in the Tomb. It would seem that when three days were over His old physical body in the wrappings was replaced by His new resurrection body. He might have then just sat up out of His wrappings of spices and linen strips. He also could just have unwrapped them. Which it was is a matter of pure conjecture. The Bible doesn't give us enough to come to a clear conclusion and it isn't important anyway. The empty wrappings did demonstrate that something remarkable had happened.

**Luke 24:12a Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb.<sup>18</sup> Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves,**

**John 20:6-7 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him (John), arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth<sup>19</sup> that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.**

Evidently, first Peter merely bent down and looked into the Tomb. Evidently the roof of the tomb was lower than Peter's eye level as he stood outside.

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<sup>18</sup> Luke's account only speaks of Peter going to the Tomb. Luke would have known Peter much better than he knew John. Peter had spent some time in Antioch where Luke lived (Galatians 2:11). Luke's mentor Paul had also spent much more time with Peter than he had with John (Galatians 1:18).

<sup>19</sup> The Greek word here is *σουδάριον* {sü-dä'-rē-on} which is derived from the Latin word *sudor* which means "sweat." It referred to a cloth which was applied to the face to wipe off sweat. It was a short jump to use this word for the cloth which covered the face in the grave. It is therefore improper to translate it "napkin" which is customarily used during eating to wipe the fingers. It is thus improperly translated by the KJV and the Amplified Bible. "Handkerchief" would be more accurate.

**John 20:8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.**

Finally, John joined Peter in the tomb.

**John 20:9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)**

Of all the people who were at the Tomb that morning, they were the only ones who didn't see an angel to explain what they were seeing. They should have understood without such a messenger. Jesus had explained it to them often enough.

**Luke 24:12b and he (Peter) went away, wondering to himself what had happened.**

**John 20:10 Then the disciples (Peter and John) went back to their homes own place,<sup>20</sup>**

They both went back to the house in which they were sheltering in Jerusalem.

**John 20:11 but Mary (Magdalene) stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over near to look into the tomb<sup>21</sup>**

Mary Magdalene probably arrived at the Tomb at least five or ten minutes after John and Peter. After all, when she had started after them on their mile run uphill, she had just finished a mile run downhill. By the time she managed to look in the Tomb for herself, John and Peter seem to have already left. She was the last, but she was in for the biggest blessing.

**John 20:12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.**

In the tomb itself she saw two angels. They weren't frightening at all, merely dressed in white. I think that speaks to Mary Magdalene's faith and love. Her faith had been born in a terrifying crucible. Before she was saved, she had been indwelt by seven demons (Mark 16:9). She had also been a victim of prostitution. She was the first to see the Risen Lord. The scene that Mary saw, with an angel sitting at the head and the feet of where Jesus had laid, spoke of the scene which had been presented in the Holy of Holies for 1500 years. There, on the cover of the Ark

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<sup>20</sup> *In the Greek this is literally "unto their own." Probably "place" could be inferred. It meant the place where they were sheltering. Obviously, their homes were in Galilee.*

<sup>21</sup> *Mary Magdalene was outside in the bright morning sunshine. She couldn't see in the dark tomb.*

of the Covenant, just as before Mary Magdalene in the Tomb, sat the figures of two angels looking down at the work of Christ represented by the contents of the Ark (Exodus 25:10-21).

**John 20:13a** **They asked her, “~~Woman~~ Dear lady, why are you crying?”**

The angels, who knew what that this Resurrection Day meant, seemed surprised that Mary Magdalene was crying. As explained on two previous occasions in the Gospel of John, the Greek word translated “woman” here is γυνή {gü-nā'}, which I concede is technically “woman.” However, we need to understand that in the Greek the address “woman” wasn't cold and impersonal, although it sounds that way in the English. In the English it sounds like a rebuke, but in the Greek that address, γυνή {gü-nā'}, was a term of respect. It is closer in meaning to “dear lady.” The two other previous times it was used in John were when Jesus spoke to his mother Mary at the wedding at Cana at the beginning of His ministry, and when Jesus spoke to his mother Mary at the foot of the cross just four days before. It is also used here and in verse 15.

**John 20:13b** **“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don't know where they have put him.”**

Remember, Mary Magdalene had run to Peter and John as soon as she saw that the Tomb had been opened. She hadn't waited to hear the announcement by the angels that Jesus was raised from the dead.

**John 20:14** **At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.**

You must remember that it was early morning. The Tomb was high on the northern ridge of Zion facing the Temple and facing the sunrise in the east. Mary was inside the darkened Tomb. Jesus was standing outside with rising sun behind Him. At first, she couldn't make out more than a shape.

**John 20:15** **“~~Woman~~ Dear lady,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”**

Even after hearing his voice Mary Magdalene didn't recognize at first that it was Jesus' voice. In some ways her pledge to retrieve Jesus' body by herself, no matter what, was similar to Peter's pledge to die defending Jesus. It was sincere and touching, but not relying on God's power.

**John 20:16** Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).<sup>22</sup>

As soon as Mary heard the figure speak her name, she knew who He was. She understood that He was the great teacher and that in Him was all the wisdom needed for life. She obviously ran to Him and hugged Him.

**John 20:17a** Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.

She evidently held onto Jesus like she wouldn't let go. After a decent interval Jesus told her to let go of His resurrection body. Perhaps this indicates that until Jesus ascended to the Father, He would not have resumed His divine omnipresence. He could only be one place at a time, and He had many other people to visit that day. We are only told of a few that He visited that day and in the succeeding forty days. I believe He must have visited many that we aren't told about.

**John 20:17b** Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Jesus gave her a message to take to the others. This message wasn't about His resurrection. It was about His upcoming ascension to the Father. That would take place after the promised upcoming trip to Galilee. The message also told that now, for every believer, His Father was our Father and His God was our God.

The scene now shifts to Matthew's account of Mary and her sister Salome returning from the Tomb. After He had shown Himself to Mary Magdalene, He showed Himself to them on the way back to Jerusalem.

**Matthew 28:9-10** Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

After He showed Himself to Mary and her sister (the mother of John and James) and they clasped and worshipped Him as Mary Magdalene had done, He reinforced the message that the angels had already given them.

**Luke 24:9-11** When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna,<sup>23</sup> Mary the mother of James,<sup>24</sup> and the

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<sup>22</sup> John's translation of the Aramaic here indicates that John was written primarily to Gentiles.

**others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.**

**John 20:18** **Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.**

These are the records of all of the women giving their various accounts of what had happened to them. We know the first party included Mary (the mother of Jesus), Salome (Mary’s sister), and Mary Magdalene. The second party included Joanna (the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household - Luke 8:3). We aren’t given the names of the others or how many they were. I wouldn’t be surprised if it was a dozen or more. I suspect that one of them was Mary the sister of Lazarus. Remember. Jesus had told her to save the remainder of the perfume for the day of his burial (John 12:7). Her sister Martha was probably also included. They at least, who had seen their brother Lazarus raised from the dead, had plenty of reasons to believe in the resurrection from the dead. I have to wonder what their brother Lazarus was thinking on that morning.

On the other hand, the men who would become eminent apostles thought that the women’s testimony about the resurrection was nonsense. They were no better than Thomas, who later refused to believe their testimony about the Risen Christ. Maybe Peter and John weren’t quite as skeptical. They at least knew the body wasn’t in the Tomb although they hadn’t seen the Lord or any angels.

Below is Mark’s abbreviated account of Mary’s experience that Sunday.

**Mark 16:9** **When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.<sup>25</sup>**

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<sup>23</sup> *According to Luke 8:3, Joanna was the wife of Cuza, who was the manager or steward of Herod Antipas’ household in Galilee. Cuza was probably the Herodian official whose son was healed by Jesus as recorded in John 4:47-54.*

<sup>24</sup> *This was Mary the mother of Jesus. At the time Luke wrote his Gospel her son James was the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Act 12:17, 15:13, 21:17, Galatians 1:19, 2:9).*

<sup>25</sup> *This comment seems to be making the point that Christ appeared first of all to one who was so abandoned to hope that she had been possessed by seven demons. The account of seven demons is also verified by Luke 8:2. Many have thought that Mary Magdalene was the subject of the story which was told of the woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:36-50). She is mentioned in all four of the Gospels. According to Luke 8, her conversion seemed to have occurred in the middle of Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> Galileean ministry.*

Here the Gospel of Mark briefly described the separate adventure of Mary Magdalene which John described more fully. He only mentioned Peter's part of that episode and not John's. Mark's account also recorded the lack of faith among most of the surviving eleven of the twelve (Judas Iscariot was dead). When recreating in your mind what the scene must have looked like that morning down in Jerusalem, it is important to remember that the Tomb faced east toward the Temple and city on the northern ridge of Mt. Zion. If you knew where to look, by full morning, the tomb with the stone rolled away would have been visible from both the Temple and much of the city.

**Mark 16:10-11** **She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.**

After she had seen Jesus she went back to where the rest of the disciples were in hiding. We presume that was the place to which Peter and John had returned. All they knew was that the Tomb was empty. They refused to believe the testimony of Mary Magdalene that she had seen Jesus. Until they saw Him with their own eyes, they refused to believe what Jesus had told them would happen.

This is Matthew's account of what happened after everyone had left the Tomb.

**Matthew 28:11** **While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests *High Priests* everything that had happened.**

Even while the women were on their way back into Jerusalem, some from the detachment of Roman soldiers who had been guarding the Tomb recovered from their paralysis and made it back to Jerusalem. These would have included the legionary in charge and probably a few of the others to corroborate his fantastic story. Properly, they reported to the High Priests (Annas and Caiaphas) to whom they had been detached. They reported exactly what had happened. Under the circumstances, they couldn't be held responsible. After all, no one had taken the body from the Tomb. It just wasn't there.

**Matthew 28:12a** **When the chief priests *High Priests* had met with the elders and devised a plan,**

Annas and Caiaphas realized that if the true story got out it would destroy their hopes of wiping the life of Jesus from human memory. As they had told Pilate when they asked for the guard, it would make "this last deception -- worse than the first." After consulting with some of the Sanhedrin (the elders) they came up with a plan.

**Matthew 28:12b-13** they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’”

Their plan was to have the soldiers tell a lie. The lie was to be that the Roman guard fell asleep and while they were sleeping the body of Jesus was stolen. From the standpoint of the soldiers, the main problem with the lie was that a Roman soldier who fell asleep on watch was quite often put to death, and at the least disgraced. To persuade the soldiers to tell the lie they had to be paid “a large sum of money.”

**Matthew 28:14** If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

Since, it was for the High Priests that the detachment had been working, they said they would assure the governor that they were satisfied with the soldiers. They probably would also have told Pilate that the lie was more in the interest of the state than of them. It is almost certain that Pilate came to hear of the reported Resurrection from his intelligence network. He would have then have closely interrogated the guards himself. This may have affected his attitude toward the Christians during the remaining six years of his governorship. History tells us that he never allowed Roman power to be used against the Christians again. Ancient Christian tradition contends that he and his wife both became Christians.

**Matthew 28:15** So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

We aren't told to whom the soldiers were to tell this lie. I expect it was to the gathered Sanhedrin who then spread the tale through the synagogues. However, somehow the whole story got out of how only the soldiers had seen an angel come down and roll away the stone.