

The Ministry Multiplication Cycle

Bill Jones

Foreword by Ken Katayama

WIPF & STOCK • Eugene, Oregon

THE MINISTRY MULTIPLICATION CYCLE

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Wipf & Stock
An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3
Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-7252-6424-3

HARDCOVER ISBN: 978-1-7252-6425-0

EBOOK ISBN: 978-1-7252-6426-7

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

04/17/20

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This book is dedicated to . . .

The students of Columbia International University
who took my classes and studied diligently
to learn Jesus' approach to ministry.

The Crossover Global team who daily implement
the principles of this book in order to plant churches
in some of the most challenging places on earth.

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Chapter 1

Historical Perspective

What Did the Ministry of Jesus Look Like?

IF YOU ARE LIKE most followers of Christ who want to impact the world for His glory, you are very busy. Just taking the time to read a book like this may seem like a luxury. And I suspect that you probably didn't read the previous introduction—you wanted to get right to the heart of the book, glean what can make you more effective at your ministry, and move on.

But wait! You need to read the introduction to this book. It won't take you three minutes. It will, however, help you know where we are going. Realizing the destination will motivate you to finish this critical chapter. Though perhaps not very exciting at times, this chapter is absolutely necessary because the information forms the foundation for everything that follows. So be quick about it. Go back and read the introduction.

Welcome back. Let's get started.

The Story of the Bible

I'm convinced that the average Christian doesn't know the Bible very well. Worse, I'm convinced that the average Christian worker doesn't know the Bible very well. Even worse, the average

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pastor doesn't know the Bible very well. Sure, most know *stories from* the Bible, but do they really know the *story of* the Bible? This concern motivated me to write two books, *Putting Together the Puzzle of the Old Testament* and *Putting Together the Puzzle of the New Testament*. Both simply and memorably seek to communicate the unifying story of Scripture. Together these books divide the Bible into ten historical eras. To help remember these ten eras, I organized them into five pairs of opposite words:

Nothing/Something

Exiting/Entering

United/Divided

Scattered/Gathered

Coming/Going

Elaborated, the Old Testament part of the story goes like this:

- God creates the human race out of *nothing*. (Genesis 1–11)
- He turns the Hebrew race into *something*—a people of great size and significance. (Genesis 12–50)
- Next we find the Hebrews *exiting* Egypt, but wandering forty years in the wilderness because of unbelief. (Exodus to Deuteronomy)
- Then we see the Hebrews *entering* the Promised Land, experiencing physical victories and spiritual defeats. (Joshua to Ruth)
- Three kings rule over the twelve Hebrew tribes in a *united* kingdom called Israel. (I Samuel to I Kings 11, plus the poetry books)
- Israel is *divided* into two nations, Israel and Judah. Assyria later conquers Israel. (I Kings 12 to II Kings 23, plus several books of the prophets)
- Due to disobedience, Judah is *scattered* when Babylon takes them into captivity. (II Kings 24–25, plus Daniel and Ezekiel)

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- Judah is *gathered* back to the Promised Land after seventy years of exile in Babylon. (Ezra to Esther, plus the last three books of the prophets)

Four centuries after Malachi writes the final book of the Old Testament, the promised Messiah is born and the New Testament begins. Two eras complete the *story of the Bible*:

- Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled with the *coming* of Christ. (Matthew to John)
- Before ascending into heaven, the resurrected Jesus commissions the *going* of the Church. (Acts to Revelation)

This information is fairly simple, yet seldom understood. That's not surprising. The Bible is a very thick book. At least we know the story of Jesus very well.

Or do we? How well do we really know the ministry of Jesus? Let's take an easy test and find out.

Question: How long did Jesus minister with the twelve disciples? Commit yourself by writing your answer below.

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If you wrote three years as most do, you are wrong. (Ouch!) If you were a bit more technical and wrote approximately three and a half years, sorry, but you are still wrong. Until I stepped away from books on ministry and spent time in the Bible investigating the ministry of Jesus, I would have written the same as you. Why? Because that's what we have been taught since Vacation Bible School. But that's not what the Bible says. Before you throw this book in the trash and label me a heretic, let's look at Scripture. Mark 3:13–19 says,

And He (Jesus) went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons. And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

As we read our Bibles and get to this passage, we subconsciously think that since the twelve disciples were always with Jesus, then this event marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry. But does it?

Interestingly, this passage in chapter 3 is not the first time we read in the Gospel of Mark about Peter, Andrew, James, John or Matthew. For some reason, however, by the time we get to Mark 3 and the story of Jesus choosing the twelve, we have already forgotten about earlier experiences Jesus had with some of His disciples. Take Mark 1:16–20, two chapters earlier, for example. That passage says,

As He (Jesus) was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat

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mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

Did you catch that? Jesus had a significant relationship with Peter, Andrew, James and John two chapters (and several months) before He called them to be part of the Twelve.

I heard a couple of speakers suggest that it was in Mark 1:16–20 that the ministry of Jesus began. They described the events leading up to Jesus’ calling of the four accurately enough, but unfortunately came to a wrong conclusion. They highlighted the ministry of John the Baptist (1:1–8), the baptism of Jesus (1:9–11), the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (1:12–13) and Jesus’ move to Galilee after John’s imprisonment (1:14–15). They then reached the story of Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James and John (1:16–20), which is the first time Mark has mentioned anything about any of the disciples. The speakers then confidently (but inaccurately) declared that as Jesus the Messiah approached the fishermen, the powerful spirituality radiating from the Messiah overwhelmed the four fishermen so much that when He called them, all four left their professions and followed a total stranger. Thus began the ministry of Jesus.

But Jesus did not meet Peter, Andrew, James and John for the first time in Mark 1. He met them much earlier. Most people don’t realize that Mark wants to focus on Jesus’ ministry in the northern district of Galilee. He doesn’t spend much time on what Jesus did early in His ministry in the southern district of Judea. It’s not that Jesus’ first year of ministry was unimportant. It is just that Mark is in a great hurry to discuss Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. As a result, he skips an entire year in the life of Jesus: everything that occurred between Jesus’ wilderness experience (Mark 1:13) and Jesus’ move to Galilee (Mark 1:14). (Luke does the exact same thing between Luke 4:13 and 4:14.)

Let me repeat. Between two verses of Scripture, Mark and Luke skip a year in the ministry of Jesus.

What then happens during this “missing” year? One must turn to the Gospel of John to find the answer. In John 1:29 we find

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Jesus returning from His wilderness experience. (Note: We know Jesus has already been baptized by the comment John the Baptist makes in John 1:32 about witnessing the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove. We also previously read in the Gospel of Mark that after His baptism, Jesus immediately went into the wilderness.) In chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, beginning with verse 29, John devotes almost four complete chapters before noting Jesus' permanent move to Galilee in John 4:43. What happens between John 1:29 and 4:43? A lot. But one interesting episode occurs in John 1:35–45. The day after Jesus returns from His fasting and temptation in the wilderness, He meets Andrew, John and Peter (1:35–42). The day after that, Jesus meets Philip and Nathanael (1:43–45). This episode is interesting because it shows that in the first few days after returning from the wilderness, Jesus is interacting with at least five of the future Twelve. In other words, at the beginning of His ministry, during that “missing” year in Mark and Luke, Jesus begins to minister *to* His future Twelve.

So back to our little quiz at the beginning of this chapter. If we had asked the question, “How long did Jesus minister *to* the Twelve?” we could have correctly answered three to three and a half years by referring to John 1:35–45. But we asked the question, “How long did Jesus minister *with* the Twelve?” That is, how long did the Twelve travel as a group around the clock with Jesus? From Mark 3:13–19, we now see that we must answer around one and a half years. (Prepositions are important!)

Please understand, our intention is not to make a big deal about the actual starting date of Jesus' ministry. What we are trying to do is show how little we truly understand about the ministry of Jesus. A lot happened in His ministry before He called the Twelve to be *with* Him on a permanent basis. As a result, the question we must then ask is, “What was Jesus doing during this time?” Up until now, we have worked backwards chronologically just to make the point that we don't know as much about the ministry of Jesus as we thought we did. For the remainder of the chapter, we will trace in chronological order the ministry of Jesus from its

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beginning to its end. Once we finish, we will see in the next chapter what we can learn to make us more effective in our own ministries.

The Ministry of Jesus

Tracing chronologically the ministry of Jesus requires that we first harmonize the gospel accounts by merging the four separate stories—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—into one seamless narrative. Two basic approaches exist for harmonizing the gospels. One is quite involved but very rewarding; the other is relatively easy, but still very rewarding.

The first approach requires that we identify all the historical markers in the four gospels such as references to the reign of Augustus Caesar or the administration of Pilate, as well as the various Jewish feasts mentioned in the Gospels like the feasts of Passover, Tabernacles and Dedication. Using the years from the historical markers and the months of the year from the Jewish feasts, we can develop a basic framework for when the various passages occur. For example, we know that a Passover (such as in John 2:13 or John 6:4) occurs around March to April and that the Feast of Dedication (such as in 10:22) occurs around December. Once you have established this basic framework, you can determine the timing of many of the passages, but not all of them. For the remaining passages you will need to spend many hours studying several reference books as you decide where to place them. If diligent, you should finish your harmony after several intense months. It took me almost two years, but I had a job that required that I go to work every day. If you invest significant time and a great deal of effort into this approach, the results are quite rewarding because you will know the ministry of Jesus and your Bible much better.

The second approach does not require nearly the effort. Go online and purchase a reputable harmony of the gospels. I recommend Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry's *A Harmony of the Gospels*. This approach is also rewarding; it saves you much time because others have spent lifetimes seeking to develop a credible timeline.

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In Appendix A you will find a detailed harmony of the Gospels. Scholars may disagree on some of the finer points, but it suffices for what we want to accomplish. In the following pages, however, you will find a simplified harmony of the gospels, with the life of Jesus divided into four periods: Christ's Private Period (from His birth to the beginning of His public ministry), Christ's Public Period (starting after His temptation in the wilderness and finishing at the beginning of His Passion week), Christ's Trials Period (starting Palm Sunday and ending the following Saturday), and Christ's Triumphant Period (starting at His resurrection and ending at His ascension). Christ's Private Period consists of seven groups of people; His Public Period covers seven geographical locations; His Trials Period lasts for seven days; and His Triumphant Period highlights three confidence boosters. I have summarized these four periods in four charts. Please note that I prefer an AD 30 date for the crucifixion. If you prefer an AD 33 crucifixion date, just add three years to the dates in Charts II, III and IV. Also note that Matthew tends to arrange his content topically, rather than chronologically, making it seem a bit confusing when compared to the other authors.

The Private Period of Christ begins with His birth to *Mary and Joseph*, immediately followed by the *angels and shepherds* offering Him worship. Six weeks later, in obedience to the Mosaic law found in Leviticus 12, Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. There *Simeon and Anna* honor baby Jesus. Luke 2:39 tells us that after Mary and Joseph "performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth." Apparently they later return to Bethlehem, perhaps to be closer to the temple, but soon Jesus is sought by the *Magi and Herod*. The wise men want to worship Jesus and Herod wants to kill Him. As a young boy, Jesus interacts with the *temple teachers*. Years later, as Jesus prepares to start His public ministry, He is baptized by *John the Baptist* and then tempted for forty days by *the devil* in the wilderness. See Chart I for the details.

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**Chart I: The Private Period of Jesus Christ
(Seven Groups of People)**

When	Where	What	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Approx. 6-4 BC	Bethlehem	Born to Mary and Joseph	1:1-25		1:1— 2:7	1:1-18
Approx. 6-4 BC	Bethlehem	Worshiped by the Angels and Shepherds			2:8-20	
Six weeks later	Jerusalem	Honored by Simeon and Anna			2:21- 40	
Approx. two years later	Bethlehem, assuming they re- turned from Nazareth	Sought by the Magi and Herod	2:1-23			
Around AD 6-8	Jerusalem	Taught by the Temple Teachers			2:41- 52	
Late AD 26	Jordan River	Baptized by John	3:1-17	1:1-11	3:1-22	
Late AD 26	Wilderness	Tempted by the Devil	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	

The Public Period of Christ focuses on His three to three-and-a-half-year ministry. To keep all that happens in order, we arrange the events according to the main geographical areas where Jesus spends the majority of His time ministering. Many times the Lord

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may travel outside of the stated area, but these tend to be short trips. For example, in John chapter 2, Jesus travels from Judea to Cana in Galilee for the wedding, but soon returns to Judea. To give context, the following map shows the five districts of Palestine during the time of Jesus. The districts of Judea, Samaria and Galilee tend to be more familiar to us than the districts of Decapolis (a mostly Gentile area) and Perea, the district the gospels tend to refer to as “beyond the Jordan.”



The Five Districts of Palestine during the New Testament

Jesus begins His Public Period based primarily in the district of Judea. Since He will later return to Judea at the end of the Public Period, we will call this part of Jesus’ ministry His *Early Judean Ministry*. During this time, we read of Him meeting five of the future twelve disciples (John 1:35–51), going to the wedding in Cana where He turns water into wine (John 2:1–12), cleansing the temple

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for the first time (John 2:13–25), interacting with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21), and spending time with His disciples baptizing (John 3:22).

After Herod takes John the Baptist into custody, Jesus leaves Judea and travels through Samaria where He meets the woman at the well. Though His *Samaritan* Ministry lasts for only a few days, it is very significant in that many Samaritans (a people who were part Jewish and part Gentile) come to Jesus as their Savior (John 4:42). As Jesus moves into the district of Galilee, we find Him finishing His first year of public ministry. (Here's something to think about, but only for a moment. In John 4, as Jesus talks to the woman at the well, John mentions that Jesus has disciples traveling with Him (John 4:8). Who are they? Be careful now. You must remember that Jesus has not yet called the Twelve to be with Him on a full-time basis. Remember, too, that future disciples like Peter and Andrew live in Capernaum in Galilee, where they work as fishermen. On the other hand, we must also wonder if John is perhaps writing about the time with the Samaritans as an eye witness. We will return to this thought later.)

Jesus spends the majority of His public ministry in Galilee, so the gospel writers devote many chapters to this time frame of His ministry. They write so much about Jesus' time in Galilee, that it helps to divide this aspect of His ministry into three parts. During the initial part of Christ's time in Galilee, what we will call the *Early Galilean Ministry*, among other things Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to leave their nets and follow Him (Mark 1:14–20; Luke 5:1–11). Together they go on a ministry trip throughout all of Galilee where they minister in various synagogues (Mark 1:39–45; Luke 5:12–16). When they return from this trip, Jesus calls Matthew (Levi) to follow Him (Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32).

A few months later, Jesus calls twelve from among His many followers to minister with Him fulltime. This event, about halfway through His overall ministry, begins what we will call the *Middle Galilean Ministry*. During this portion of Jesus' ministry, He travels with the Twelve from one side of the district of Galilee to the other side. Toward the end, He sends His twelve disciples to minister in teams of two (Mark 6:7–13; Luke 9:1–6).

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After a few months, Jesus' Middle Galilean Ministry ends and His *Latter Galilean Ministry* begins when He takes a series of short trips with the twelve disciples to various Gentile areas. During this segment of His ministry, Jesus, along with the Twelve, visits Tyre and Sidon (7:24–30), the district of Decapolis (Mark 7:31—8:10) and Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–38; Luke 9:18–27). After returning to Galilee, Jesus and the Twelve begin the journey south.

As AD 29 draws to a close, Jesus and His ministry team spend a few months in Judea. Apparently, they minister there during the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (John 7:1—8:59), which occurs around October as well as the Feast of Dedication (John 9:1—10:39) which occurs around December. In the days between these two feasts, Jesus sends seventy of His disciples in teams of two to announce that the Kingdom of God has arrived. We call this time frame the *Latter Judean Ministry*.

In the weeks leading up to Passover and His passion week, Jesus spends His time in the district of Perea, the region Scripture calls “beyond the Jordan.” Luke devotes 13:22 to 19:28 of his gospel to these days of Jesus' ministry. We label this part of His ministry the *Perean Ministry*.

Chart II: The Public Period of Jesus Christ (Seven Geographical Locations)

When	Where	What	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Late AD 26 to Late AD 27	Early Judean Ministry	See Appendix A				1:19– 3:36
Early AD 28	Samaritan Ministry	See Appendix A				4:1– 42

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When	Where	What	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Early AD 28 to around October AD 28	Early Galilean Ministry (arrives in Galilee— appoints the 12)	See Appendix A	4:12-25; 8:2-4, 14-17; 9:1-17; 12:1-21	1:14- 3:12	4:14- 6:11	4:43- 5:47
Around November AD 28 to around April AD 29	Middle Galilean Ministry (appoints the 12— departs for Gentile regions)	See Appendix A	5:1-8:1; 8:5-13, 18, 23-34; 9:18-26; 11:2-30; 12:22-15:20	3:13- 7:23	6:12- 9:17	6:1- 7:1
Around May to September AD 29	Latter Galilean Ministry (arrives in Gentile regions— departs for Judea)	See Appendix A	8:19-22; 15:21-18:35	7:24- 9:50	9:18- 62	7:2- 10
Around October to December AD 29	Latter Judean Ministry	See Appendix A		10:1a	10:1- 13:21	7:11- 10:39
Around January to March AD 30	Perean Ministry	See Appendix A	19:1-20:34; 26:6-13	10:1b- 52	13:22- 19:28	10:40- 11:54

We identified the final week in the ministry of Jesus as the Trials Period of Christ due to all of His suffering. The gospel writers allocate almost one third of their chapters to these seven days. It

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does not require much effort to remember the key events that took place on each of these days.

On *Sunday*, having spent the previous night in Bethany at the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Jesus crosses the Mount of Olives into the City of Jerusalem where the people celebrate His Triumphal Entry (Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–44). He returns to Bethany to spend Sunday night.

The following day, *Monday*, Jesus cleanses the Temple by driving out those buying and selling in the temple, as well as overturning the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves (Mark 11:12–18; Luke 19:45–48).

On *Tuesday*, Jesus answers four questions from those seeking to entrap Him and get Him into trouble with the authorities (Mark 11:19—12:44; Luke 20:1—21:6) and two questions from His disciples (Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:7–38).

Though we cannot be completely confident regarding the exact day, a good case can be made from Luke that Judas plotted with the Pharisees on *Wednesday* to betray Jesus for money (Mark 14:1–2, 10–11; Luke 22:1–6).

Several important events occur on *Thursday*. Jesus hosts what we call the Last Supper with His disciples. Afterward, they walk to a garden on the Mount of Olives where a group from among the chief priests, scribes and elders arrest Jesus. Later, Jesus endures two trials, one with Ananias and the other with the High Priest and the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:12–72; Luke 22:7–65).

On *Friday*, Jesus goes through four more trials: one final religious trial, plus three more civil trials. Pilate presides over the first and third civil trials. Herod Antipas presides over the second one. After the trials, Jesus is taken to the cross where He is crucified and subsequently buried in a tomb cut from rock (Mark 15:1–47; Luke 22:66—23:56a).

On *Saturday*, a group of soldiers is assigned to guard the tomb (Matt 27:62–66).

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**Chart III: The Trials Period of Jesus Christ
(Seven Intense Days)**

When	Where	What	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Sunday	Jerusalem	Triumphal Entry	21:1-11, 14-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
Monday	Temple	Cleansing of the Temple	21:12-13, 18-19	11:12-18	19:45-48	12:20-50
Tuesday	Temple and Mt. of Olives	Questions & Answers	21:20-25:46	11:19-13:37	20:1-21:38	
Wednesday	Jerusalem	Judas arranges his betrayal (?)	26:1-5, 14-16	14:1-2, 10-11	22:1-6	
Thursday	Jerusalem and Mt. of Olives	Last Supper and Garden of Gethsemane	26:17-75	14:12-72	22:7-65	13:1-18:27
Friday	Jerusalem	Crucifixion	27:1-61	15:1-47	22:66-23:56a	18:28-19:42
Saturday	Jerusalem	Guards placed at the tomb	27:62-66	16:1	23:56b	

The Triumphant Period of Christ's ministry lasts forty days, from His resurrection to His ascension. We can follow and recall chronologically what happens during this period by remembering three confidence boosters. The first confidence booster highlights the *absence of Jesus* from His tomb. Sunday morning visits, first

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by the women, and later Peter and John, verify that the grave is empty, glorious good news indeed. Yet the initial reaction of the women is the suspicion that the body of Jesus may have been stolen. How could the followers of Christ know He had actually risen from the dead? The next series of events quells their fears and gives them great confidence. Over a span of forty days, the followers of Christ personally see the risen Lord. Scripture records at least *ten appearances of Jesus*. These appearances occur in a variety of locations and groups, from single individuals to large crowds. During the culminating event at the end of the forty days, the followers of Christ watch the *ascension of Jesus* as He is lifted into the air, disappearing behind a cloud.

Chart IV—The Triumphant Period of Jesus Christ (Three Confidence Builders)

When	Where	What	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Absence of Jesus (An Empty Tomb)						
Day 1 (Sunday)	Jerusalem	Verified by the women	28:1–8	16:1–8	24:1–11	20:1
Day 1	Jerusalem	Verified by Peter and John			24:12	20:2–10
The Ten Appearances of Jesus						
Day 1	The tomb	To Mary Magdalene		16:9–11		20:11– 18
Day 1	The tomb	To the other women	28:9–15			
Day 1	Jerusalem	To Cleopas and another		16:12– 13	24:13– 33	

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When	Where	What	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Day 1	Jerusalem	To Peter			24:34- 35	
Day 1	Jerusalem	To the Ten			24:36- 43	20:19- 25
After 8 days (So either PM of Day 9 or AM of Day 10)	Jerusalem	To the Eleven		16:14		20:26- 31
???? (But after a two day walk from Jerusalem)	Sea of Galilee	To the Seven				21:1-25
????	Unknown mountain in Galilee	To the Eleven and maybe to 500 others (1 Cor 15:6)	28:16-20	16:15- 18		
????	????	To James (1 Cor 15:7)				
Day 40	Mount of Olives	To the Dis- ciples (Acts 1:6-11, 1 Cor 15:7)			24:44- 49	
The Ascension of Jesus						
Day 40	Mount of Olives	Jesus Ascends into Heaven (Acts 1:11)		16:19- 20	24:50- 53	

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Now that we have a simple harmony of the four gospels, we can inspect more closely the ministry of Jesus summarized in Charts II, III and IV. We will take this in depth look in the next chapter.