Jerusalem or Galilee

I'll lay this out as a harmony of the resurrection accounts, then answer the "why Galilee if Jerusalem happened first?" question without flattening either location.

The key clue is that Matthew itself already proves "Galilee" did not mean "Jesus will appear nowhere else." Jesus meets the women near the tomb and still tells them, "go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee."

Thought for 49s

You are not missing something. The tension is real, but the answer is that **Galilee was the appointed regathering / commissioning meeting**, while **Jerusalem was the immediate resurrection-witness location**.

The angel did **not** say, "Jesus will not appear to anyone until Galilee." He said:

"He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him."
— Matthew 28:7 / Mark 16:7

And Matthew immediately proves that Galilee was not exclusive, because **Jesus Himself appears to the women near the tomb** and still repeats the Galilee instruction:

"Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."
— Matthew 28:10

So Jesus can appear near Jerusalem **and still require the Galilee meeting**.

The sequence, as far as Scripture lets us reconstruct it

1. Before the cross: Jesus predicts the scattering and the Galilee regathering

At the Last Supper, Jesus says:

"All ye shall be offended because of me this night… I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."
— Matthew 26:31–32

This matters. Galilee is tied to the **scatter/regather** promise.

The Shepherd is struck.
The sheep scatter.
After resurrection, the Shepherd **goes before them** into Galilee.

That is shepherd language. He is not merely saying, “I will appear at a geographical location.” He is saying, in effect:

After your failure, after your fear, after your scattering, I will still be your Shepherd, and I will regather you.

2. Resurrection morning: the women are told to send the disciples to Galilee

The women come to the tomb. The angel announces the resurrection and says:

“Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.”
— Matthew 28:7

Mark adds a beautiful restoration detail:

“Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee.”
— Mark 16:7

“And Peter” matters because Peter had fallen hard. The Galilee message is not just logistics. It is restoration.

Tell the disciples. Tell Peter. The Shepherd is still gathering His scattered sheep.

3. Still near Jerusalem: Jesus appears to the women

Before the disciples ever get to Galilee, Jesus appears to the women:

“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them…”
— Matthew 28:9

Then He repeats the command:

“Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”
— Matthew 28:10

This is the key. Jesus appears in the Jerusalem area, but He does **not** cancel Galilee. He confirms it.

So the Galilee appointment is still standing.

4. Resurrection day: Peter and John inspect the tomb

John records Peter and John running to the tomb after Mary Magdalene reports it:

“Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.”
— John 20:3

They see the empty tomb, but John says:

“For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”
— John 20:9

So even with the empty tomb, full understanding has not landed yet.

5. Resurrection day: Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene

John then focuses on Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the risen Christ near the tomb:

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary.”
— John 20:16

Jesus sends her to the brethren with a message:

“Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father…”
— John 20:17

Again, this is still in the Jerusalem resurrection setting.

6. Resurrection day: Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus

Luke records Jesus appearing to two disciples as they leave Jerusalem toward Emmaus:

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus…”
— Luke 24:13

Jesus opens the Scriptures to them, breaks bread with them, and then they return to Jerusalem to tell the others.

7. Resurrection evening: Jesus appears to the gathered disciples in Jerusalem

That same evening, the disciples are gathered behind locked doors:

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week… came Jesus and stood in the midst.”
— John 20:19

This is where He shows them His wounds:

“He shewed unto them his hands and his side.”
— John 20:20

Luke gives the same Jerusalem appearance:

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see.”
— Luke 24:39

So yes: **the wound-revelation happens in Jerusalem.**

But this does not replace Galilee. This is the immediate resurrection proof, peace, and witness event.

8. Eight days later: Jesus appears again, with Thomas present

Thomas had not been present the first evening. So eight days later:

“After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus…”
— John 20:26

Jesus says:

“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.”
— John 20:27

This also appears to be in the Jerusalem setting.

So Jerusalem has at least these major functions:

empty tomb, first witness, wounds shown, unbelief answered, peace spoken, Scripture opened, apostolic testimony anchored.

9. After this: the disciples go to Galilee

Matthew then says:

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.”
— Matthew 28:16

That phrase is important:

“where Jesus had appointed them.”

So Galilee was not random. It was an appointed meeting.

There Jesus gives the Great Commission:

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations…”
— Matthew 28:18–19

This fits your previous Galilee study perfectly.

Galilee of the nations is where the Light began shining publicly in Matthew 4, fulfilling Isaiah 9. Then after resurrection, from Galilee, Jesus sends the disciples to **all nations**.

So the movement is:

Galilee of the nations → Light appears → disciples are called → Shepherd is struck → sheep scatter → Shepherd regathers them in Galilee → sends them to all nations.

That is not accidental geography.

10. John 21 also happens in Galilee

John 21 says:

“After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias.”
— John 21:1

The Sea of Tiberias is the Sea of Galilee.

There Jesus restores Peter with the threefold “lovest thou me?” and gives him shepherding language:

“Feed my lambs.”
“Feed my sheep.”
— John 21:15–17

That is massive in this sequence.

Peter denied Him three times.
The angel said, “tell his disciples **and Peter**.”
Then in Galilee, Jesus restores Peter as an under-shepherd.

So Galilee is not merely “the Great Commission place.” It is also a restoration place.

11. Later, they return to Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit

Luke ends with Jesus telling them:

“Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”
— Luke 24:49

Acts clarifies that Jesus appeared to them over a period of forty days:

“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs… being seen of them forty days…”
— Acts 1:3

Then He commands them not to depart from Jerusalem until the promise of the Father:

“That they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.”
— Acts 1:4

Then the ascension happens near the Mount of Olives / Bethany area, and they return to Jerusalem.

So the big movement is:

Jerusalem → Galilee → Jerusalem.

Not contradiction. Sequence.

So why did Jesus meet them in Jerusalem first?

Because Jerusalem had to be the place of **resurrection proof and legal witness**.

Jesus died at Jerusalem.
The tomb was near Jerusalem.
The first witnesses were there.
The disciples were hiding there.
Thomas’s unbelief was answered there.
The wounds were shown there.
The resurrection testimony began there.

Luke makes this theological geography explicit:

“That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
— Luke 24:47

So Jerusalem is the **beginning of witness**.

But Galilee is the **appointed regathering and nations-commission location**.

That means the two places carry different meanings:

Jerusalem:
Death, burial, resurrection proof, wounds, peace, witness beginning, waiting for the Spirit.

Galilee:
Regathering after scattering, restoration of failed disciples, Peter restored, Light-to-the-nations pattern, Great Commission.

The clean answer

The angel told Mary to tell the disciples to go to Galilee because **Galilee was the appointed post-resurrection regathering and commissioning place** promised by Jesus before the cross.

Jesus met them in Jerusalem first because **they were still there**, afraid, confused, slow to believe, and because the resurrection had to be witnessed and confirmed at the very place where He had died and risen.

So it is not:

Angel says Galilee, but Jesus changed plans and met them in Jerusalem.

It is:

Jesus first appears in Jerusalem to establish resurrection witness, show His wounds, speak peace, and open understanding. Then He regathers the scattered disciples in Galilee, restores them, and sends them to the nations. Then they return to Jerusalem to wait for the Spirit.

The pattern is beautiful:

Jerusalem: The Lamb is slain and shown alive.
Galilee: The Shepherd regathers the scattered sheep and sends them to the nations.
Jerusalem: The witnesses wait until clothed with power from on high.

could it be that the core desciples, the remaining 11 are not ALL of the desciples, and the desciples gathering are the additional desciples? I think there was 120 desciples, but Jesus had his closest desciples. Or is it possible that the Thomas event happens in Galilee, maybe after Peter and John are called from the boat on the sea, and Peter and John went to the sea while waiting, and it was the eight days later that Jesus appeared? Maybe Peter was not in the Jerusalem upper room?

You're asking the right question, because "disciples" is not always the same size circle in the Gospels. I'll separate the broader disciple group, the Eleven, Peter's location, Thomas's location, and Galilee's appointed role.

Thought for 26s

Yes — **"disciples" can mean a broader group than the Eleven**, and that helps. But it probably does **not** solve the whole Jerusalem/Galilee question by moving the Thomas event to Galilee.

The best reading is:

Jerusalem had a mixed gathering: the core apostolic group plus other disciples.
Galilee was still the appointed regathering/commissioning place for the Eleven.

1. “Disciples” is broader than the Eleven

You are absolutely right. Jesus had more disciples than the Twelve/Eleven.

We see that clearly in Acts:

“The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.”
— Acts 1:15

So yes, there were the **Eleven**, but also a larger circle of disciples: women, family members, Emmaus disciples, other followers, and eventually the 120 gathered in Jerusalem.

Luke 24 makes this clear. After the two Emmaus disciples return to Jerusalem, they find:

“the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.”
— Luke 24:33

That phrase matters:

the Eleven + those with them

So the Jerusalem gathering was not necessarily only the Eleven. It was a mixed disciple gathering.

2. But Peter was probably in the Jerusalem gathering

Your idea that Peter may not have been there is possible to question, but Luke makes it hard to sustain.

Luke says the Emmaus disciples returned to Jerusalem and found:

“the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.”
— Luke 24:33

Then the gathered group says:

“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”
— Luke 24:34

Then:

“As they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them.”
— Luke 24:36

That strongly suggests Peter/Simon was part of the Jerusalem testimony scene. Also John 20 has Peter in Jerusalem earlier that day, running to the tomb with John.

So I would say:

Peter was almost certainly in Jerusalem resurrection day.
Thomas was the one specifically absent from that first gathered-room appearance.

John says:

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”
— John 20:24

That does not say all the others were present, but it singles Thomas out as absent.

3. “The Eleven” can function as a group-title, not always a headcount

This helps with a small tension.

Luke says “the eleven” were gathered, but John says Thomas was absent. That means “the Eleven” can be used like a group designation, not always a mathematically exact count in that moment.

Paul does something similar in 1 Corinthians 15:5:

“He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.”

But Judas was already gone. “The Twelve” had become a recognized title for the apostolic witness group, even when the literal number was not exactly twelve.

So Luke’s “the eleven gathered together” does not require every remaining apostle to be physically in the room at that exact second. John gives the added detail: **Thomas was not there.**

4. Could the Thomas event have happened in Galilee?

Technically, John 20:26 does **not explicitly name the city**.

It says:

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them…”
— John 20:26

So someone could ask, “Could this have been in Galilee?”

But the flow of John makes **Jerusalem much more likely**.

Here is why:

John 20 is still moving in the resurrection-day/Jerusalem setting:

tomb → Mary → locked room → Thomas absent → eight days later Thomas present

Then John 21 starts with a clear location shift:

“After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias.”
— John 21:1

The Sea of Tiberias is Galilee.

That phrase “after these things” makes John 21 sound like the move to Galilee happens **after** the Thomas event, not before it.

Also, John 21 names the disciples present in Galilee:

“There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.”
— John 21:2

Notice Thomas is there in Galilee in John 21, but that scene is presented **after** the wound encounter of John 20.

So the cleanest order is:

Thomas doubts in Jerusalem.
Jesus answers Thomas eight days later, likely still in Jerusalem.
After these things, some disciples go to Galilee and fish.
Jesus appears at the Sea of Tiberias/Galilee.

5. Could Peter and John have gone fishing while waiting for the Galilee appointment?

Yes, that part is very possible.

After the Jerusalem appearances, the disciples had the Galilee instruction still hanging over them. They likely went north to Galilee because Jesus had appointed them there.

While in Galilee, Peter says:

“I go a fishing.”
— John 21:3

The others say:

“We also go with thee.”

That likely happens **while they are in Galilee**, before or around the appointed mountain meeting of Matthew 28.

But I would not place that fishing scene before Thomas’s wound encounter. John’s order strongly places the fishing scene after Thomas.

6. What about the 120?

The 120 appear in Acts 1 after Jesus’ ascension, in Jerusalem:

“The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.”
— Acts 1:15

That is after Jesus has appeared for forty days and after the disciples return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.

So the 120 show us the broader disciple body, but they are not necessarily the exact group in John 20 or Matthew 28.

There may have been several post-resurrection gatherings:

small groups — Mary, women, Peter, Emmaus disciples
gathered disciples in Jerusalem — the Eleven’s circle plus others
the Eleven in Galilee — Matthew 28
seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee — John 21
possibly 500 brethren at once — 1 Corinthians 15:6
about 120 in Jerusalem after ascension — Acts 1:15

Best reconstruction

Here is the likely sequence:

1. Resurrection morning near Jerusalem
Women find the empty tomb. Angel says He is risen and will go before them into Galilee.

2. Jesus appears near Jerusalem
Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and to the women.

3. Peter and John inspect the tomb
They are still in Jerusalem.

4. Jesus appears privately to Peter
Luke 24:34 says He appeared to Simon.

5. Jesus appears to the Emmaus disciples
They return to Jerusalem.

6. Resurrection evening in Jerusalem
Jesus appears to the gathered disciples. This group includes the apostolic circle and others. Thomas is absent. Peter was likely present.

7. Eight days later, likely still Jerusalem
Jesus appears again, with Thomas present, and shows His wounds.

8. After these things, disciples go to Galilee
John 21: Sea of Tiberias. Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James/John, and two others are fishing. Jesus appears and restores Peter.

9. The Eleven go to the appointed mountain in Galilee
Matthew 28:16–20. Jesus gives the Great Commission.

10. They later return to Jerusalem
Jesus tells them to wait for the promise of the Father. Acts 1 places them in Jerusalem with about 120 gathered.

The cleanest answer to your question

Yes, **"disciples" includes more than the Eleven**, and the Jerusalem room likely had more than just the core apostles.

But no, the Thomas event is probably **not Galilee**. John's sequence strongly suggests the Thomas event happened before the Galilee fishing scene.

And Peter was probably **not absent** from the Jerusalem appearance. The text points to Peter being in Jerusalem, having already received a personal appearance from Jesus, while Thomas was the notable absent one.

So the refined picture is:

Jerusalem was not a replacement for Galilee.
Jerusalem was the immediate resurrection-witness gathering.
Galilee was the promised Shepherd-regathering and nations-commissioning appointment.

I think I can live with the desciples being two groups, the eleven, and the 120. The 11 were his closest, and he came to them first, and then the shepherd led the 11 to galilee to meet the remaining desciples. Both can be true with this paradyme.
Thought for 4s

Yes — I think that paradigm works **as long as we keep one careful distinction**:

The text clearly supports:

1. The Eleven as the close/core apostolic disciples
They are the scattered sheep Jesus specifically promised to regather.

2. A broader disciple body beyond the Eleven
Acts 1 shows about 120 gathered later in Jerusalem, and Luke 24:33 already says:

"the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them."

So there were definitely **the Eleven + others**.

The only caution is this: Scripture does **not directly say** the 120 were the exact Galilee group. The 120 are specifically named in Acts 1 in Jerusalem after the ascension. But the idea that Jesus' Galilee meeting involved more than the Eleven is very plausible, especially when we include Paul's statement:

"After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once…"
— 1 Corinthians 15:6

That could very possibly connect to a larger Galilee gathering, though Scripture does not explicitly say so.

So your paradigm can be stated carefully like this:

Jesus first appears to the core scattered disciples in Jerusalem, showing them His wounds, speaking peace, answering unbelief, and establishing resurrection witness. Then, as the Shepherd who promised to go before them, He leads the Eleven to Galilee, where the regathering expands beyond the core group and the mission to the nations is formally announced.

That lets both be true:

Jerusalem: the core witnesses are restored and grounded in the resurrection.
Galilee: the Shepherd regathers and commissions outward toward the nations.

The pattern becomes:

The Shepherd is struck → the close sheep scatter → the risen Shepherd appears to them in Jerusalem → He leads them to Galilee → the circle expands → the mission goes to all nations.

That is a very strong way to hold the texts together without forcing a contradiction.