



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Race to the Tomb: John Emerge

Bible Reading: John 20:1-10

SUMMARY: In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' first resurrection appearance is to Mary Magdalene; John, the 'Beloved Disciple' is the first to believe (without seeing). In stark contrast, Paul and Luke emphasize Peter as the primary resurrection eyewitness, while the Beloved Disciple is conspicuously absent from their accounts. Peter and Paul loomed large in the early church, shaping its direction. Yet, decades later, the Fourth Gospel emerged as a counterpoint centered on John, the Beloved Disciple, challenging traditional perspectives. John's detailed account of the 'race to the tomb' is purposeful, placing the Beloved Disciple on par with Peter, without diminishing the latter. Moreover, it shifts the focus from authoritative apostolic appearances to the believers' saving faith in Jesus' resurrection. John also elevates women's roles, exemplified by Mary Magdalene. In the 'race to the tomb,' Peter and John are representative figures, symbolizing contrasting paradigms for the church: one rooted in institutional hierarchy, the other in a more egalitarian familial structure. This narrative has contemporary relevance. Just as the early church faced alternative models, modern congregations must choose between hierarchical rigidity and inclusive egalitarianism. The 'race to the tomb' serves as a poignant metaphor for these options: What kind of church do we aspire to be?

NT Accounts of Jesus' Resurrection Appearances

- A. Paul Recites the 'Official Authoritative Account' (1 Cor. 15:3-5) 53-54 AD
- "Paul's list noticeably varies from the Gospel accounts— *it lacks an appearance to Mary Magdalene, includes the appearance to Peter...*" — Charles E. Neff
- B. Luke on the Empty Tomb & Appearances (Lk. 24:12, 24, 34) 64-70 AD
1. Peter's solo trip to the Tomb (Lk. 24:12)
 2. Luke omits the Beloved Disciple's belief & Mary Magdalene's Encounter
 3. John, the 'Beloved Disciple,' is Invisible in the Synoptics

John's Account of the Empty Tomb (Jn. 20:3-10) 90-95 AD

A. Peter's solo visit transformed into a 'Race to the Tomb'

- "Peter's solo visit to the tomb in Lk. 24:12 becomes in John a visit with 2 characters, Peter & the BD" —RI. Letellier

B. The Beloved Disciple uniquely Believed based on the Empty Tomb (20:8b)

- "The Beloved Disciple is the only character in the NT who believes in the resurrection merely because of the physical evidence at the tomb." —R. Alan Culpepper

Peter & the Beloved Disciple—Compare & Contrast

- There's a "consistent & deliberate contrast between Peter & the Beloved Disciple, the hero of [John's] community." —Raymond Brown

A. The Beloved Disciple elevated alongside Peter, without diminishing him

- "The Beloved Disciple has a unique position alongside that of Peter... but without in any way diminishing Peter's special place among the disciples." —Herman Ridderbos
- "There's no attempt to denigrate Peter... It's not so much that the importance of Peter is played down; rather the attempt is to elevate the importance of the Beloved Disciple." —David J. Hawkin

Peter & the Beloved Disciple as Representative Figures

A. Historical, but also Representative Figures

B. Not rivalry, but the BD's equal elevation

C. Symbols of John's & Peter's Communities

1. Peter & John: Historical and Representative Figures
2. The 'Official Account' emphasizes Peter/Paul & neglects John's Community & Women Disciples
3. The 4th Gospel Recognizes another type of Discipleship/Church
 - John's "community secured its own position by placing the Beloved Disciple alongside Simon Peter ...John 21 ...is a demand for the recognition of another type of discipleship, just as authentic as that of the original apostles." —Raymond E. Brown
4. Johannine Church vs. Petrine/Apostolic Church

John Legitimizes an Alternative 'way of doing church'

A. The Alternatives

- "Johannine Christianity was marking out a distinctive path within...later 1st-century Christianity"—James Dunn B. The Institutional vs. Family Model of Church
- "The understanding of the church is... sharply different in the 2 traditions: '[Jesus' entrusting] the keys to the kingdom... to Peter in the archetype of an institutional model of church government, while [entrusting] the mother of Jesus to the Beloved Disciple is the archetype of a familial' — Paul N. Anderson