



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Overview:

“John understands Jesus’ death as the consummate expression of divine love, but recognizes that this is only apparent in retrospect, from the vantage point of the resurrection. In Johannine theology, the action of the risen Jesus is what brings people to faith through which his life & death can be understood. The resurrection is essential for authentic faith because faith is a relationship with a living being. According to John, the crucifixion communicates the divine love that is the basis for a relationship with Jesus, & the resurrection means that this relationship is more than remembering one who has died. Faith is active trust in a Jesus who is unseen yet alive.” (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel*, p. 123)

1. Eye-witnesses Who Knew Jesus Had Died (Jn. 19:25, 35, 38-42)

- a. Joseph & Nicodemus buried Jesus’ body in a tomb
- b. Mary came to Jesus’ tomb early on Sunday morning (Jn. 20:1)
 - a. The conclusion of the Gospel focuses on people who know that Jesus has died...They are certain that his adversaries killed him & that his corpse was placed in a tomb. The question is how anyone can believe that he has risen.” (Craig Koester, *Op. Cit.*, p. 124)

2. Mary’s Logical Conclusion (Jn. 20:2b, 13b, 15b)

- a. Aligned with the standard Jewish understanding of resurrection (Jn. 11:24; 5:28-29; Dan. 12:2)
- b. Repeated three times
 - a. To Peter & John: “They’ve taken the Lord out of the tomb & we don’t know where they’ve laid him.”
 - a. “Mary interprets the removal of the stone from the tomb as evidence that someone has stolen Jesus’ body.” (Gail O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary: John*, p. 720)
 - b. Mary’s response is immediate & commonsensical. She assumes that Jesus is still dead & that someone has taken the body (20:2). Her perception is shaped by ordinary experience Mary is convinced that Jesus is dead & that the open tomb can readily be explained by the practice of grave robbery.” (Craig Koester, *Op. Cit.*, p. 124)

- c. "Mary assumes that the body of Jesus has been stolen by grave robbers or moved by the authorities (20:2). She doesn't consider the possibility of resurrection." (Josh Wredberg & Matt Carter, Exalting Jesus Commentary: John, p. 450)
- d. "[Mary] had seen that the tomb was empty & concluded that the body had been stolen (what else?). Apparently the thought of a resurrection did not enter her head. So she told the two men that the body had been taken away." (Leon Morris, NICNT: John, p. 736)
- b. To the angels: "They've taken my Lord, & we don't know where they've put him."
- a. "Mary's...return to the tomb is presupposed by v. 11...Verses 11-13...contain several distinctive Johannine emphases. First, John is the only gospel in which Mary 'weeps' at the tomb...Second, the angels make no Easter announcement, but only draw renewed attention to Mary's grief...Mary's response to the angels is a reiteration of her words at v. 2, but now she speaks exclusively of the cause of her own grief, not the community's confusion. Finally, John alone among the Gospels locates the angels as sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head & the other at the feet. This explicit link between the angels' location & Jesus' body may contain an echo of Jesus' opening eschatological promise of angels ascending & descending on the Son of Man (1:51). These angels are not messengers, but are evidence of the inbreaking of the promised new age in Jesus' death & resurrection." (Gail O'Day, Op. Cit, pp. 721-2)
- c. To Jesus: "Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him, & I will take him away."
- a. The dramatic & theological heart of this story is vv. 14-18. Verse 14 establishes the story's dramatic tension; the reader knows what Mary does not: that the person she sees is Jesus. This setting increases the reader's participation in the story that is about to unfold..." (Gail O'Day, Op. Cit, p. 722)
- b. "...[S]he turned right around & saw Jesus standing there. Why she did not recognize him is not said. It is possible that tears were blurring her vision, but tears are not usually a reason for failing to recognize someone well known to us. There seems to have been something different about the risen Jesus so that he was not always recognized." (Leon Morris, Op. Cit, p. 740)
- c. Why Mary took [Jesus] for the gardener is not clear. Perhaps it was the only logical thing. Who else would be in the garden so early, & who else would question her as to what she was doing? What is certain is that...she leaped to the conclusion that he may well have carried away the body she was seeking." (Leon Morris, Op. Cit, p. 741)
- d. Mary Magdalene remains unwavering in her conviction that the body has been stolen, even when she looks into the tomb & sees two angels (20:12)...When the angels ask why she is weeping, she speaks to them as she spoke to the disciples...The pattern persists even when Mary sees the risen Jesus. We might expect seeing to bring resurrection faith, but Mary does not recognize Jesus. Again, seeing is not believing. Mary's logic is impeccable. She naturally assumes that the man in the garden must be the gardener. So she speaks to him as she spoke to the disciples & the angels, expressing her conviction that the body was stolen (20:15)." (Craig Koester, Op. Cit, p. 125)
- c. Trapped her
- a. "Grand as her devotion to Jesus was, her estimate of him was still far too small." (D. A. Carson, Pillar Commentary: John, p.)
- d. Robbing graves was a common occurrence
- a. The robbing of graves was a crime sufficiently common that the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) eventually ordered capital punishment to be meted out to those convicted of destroying tombs, removing bodies or even displacing the sealing stones." (D. A. Carson, Op. Cit, p. 500)
- ### 3. Mary Encounters Jesus
- a. He Meets Her Where She Is (Jn. 20:11, 15-16)
- a. "Theologically, the empty tomb is a presupposition for resurrection faith, but it is not the basis of resurrection faith. Such faith requires an encounter with the risen Jesus himself." (Craig Koester, Op. Cit, p. 125)
- a. In her crying & weeping condition
- b. Calls he by name: Mary
- a. "The interchange between Jesus & Mary reveals him as the good shepherd; he knows his sheep by name, & they respond to his voice." (Gail O'Day, Op. Cit, p. 722)
- b. "There is something very moving about this first meeting of the risen Lord with [Mary]...[W]e have no reason for thinking of Mary as being a particularly important person. Yet it was to her & not to any of the outstanding leaders of the apostolic band that the Lord appeared first." (Leon Morris, Op. Cit, p. 740)
- c. "Mary recognizes Jesus when he calls her by name...This is the pivotal moment. Being called by name is what moves Mary from the conviction that Jesus is dead to the realization that he is alive." (Craig Koester, Op. Cit, pp. 125-6)
- d. "With a masterly economy of language John tells how Mary came to know that it was Jesus. The risen Christ utters but one word, her name. Mary[S]omething in the way the name was spoken caught her attention. When the Good Shepherd calls his sheep they know his voice (10:3-4)."

e. Whatever the cause of her blindness, the single word Mary, spoken as Jesus had always uttered it, was enough to remove it. The good shepherd 'calls his own sheep by name...& his sheep follow him because they know his voice' (10:3-4). Anguish & despair are instantly swallowed up by astonishment & delight." (D. A. Carson, Op. Cit, p. 504)

b. Mary becomes the first messenger for Jesus' resurrection

4. How Can We Encounter Jesus Today?

a. Those who saw Jesus investigated the evidence before them carefully (Jn. 20:1, 5, 6, 8)

a. "The method of progressive revelation is...at work in [Jn. 20:1-10], especially in the use of the word 'see' (?????) / ?????? / ????? – blepo/theoreo/horao). Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb early & "saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb" (Jn 20:1). But her 'seeing' does not lead her to believe in the resurrection. Then, as the beloved disciple came to the tomb "he bent down to look in & saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in" (Jn 20:5). There is, clearly, a progression on his seeing, but that is still not enough to lead to a belief in the resurrection. The verb used in both these instances is ????? (blepo). ????? (blepo) normally means to perceive with the eyes...As such, the one who saw may remember what was seen, but that would not necessarily need any internal processing of the information. Mary Magdalene & the Beloved Disciple perceived the empty tomb outwardly. "Then Simon Peter came, following him, & went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there..." (Jn 20:6). There is a change in the verb in the Greek version. John uses the verb ?????? (theoreo) here. The change of verb indicates a change in the intensity of the 'seeing.' ?????? (theoreo) means "to observe something with continuity and attention, often with the implication that what is observed is something unusual." As such, Peter's seeing the empty tomb is more intense & clear. There is also indication that what he saw inside the tomb is unusual! After Peter went in, "the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, & he saw & believed" (Jn 20:8). There is again a change in the verb in Greek. The author, now, uses the verb ????? (horao). ????? (horao) too indicates seeing in general, but with a stress on seeing in a transcendent manner. Unlike ?????? (blepo) in the earlier instances, ????? (horao) here indicates an internal mental processing, concerning what was perceived. Therefore, such 'seeing' leads to the belief in the resurrection. As such, the concerned unit makes a progressive revelation using different connotations of the act of seeing."
(Bibin Madathil, Bibspaces: The Empty Tomb According to John)

b. "The Greek verb (theoréo)...means 'to gaze, to look with interest & for a purpose, usually indicating the careful observation of details.'" (Karla Zazueta, Mary Magdalene: Repainting Her Portrait of Misconceptions, in 'Vindicating the Vixens', p. 268)

b. We have the eye-witness reports to investigate for ourselves (Jn. 20:29)

a. John's Gospel is written for people who have not seen the risen Jesus or the signs he performed. In its pages readers find that genuine faith is evoked by the words people receive from or about Jesus...For people in later generations...[we] need not look elsewhere for wonders to believe in. [We] find in John's text the words & works of Jesus that call [us] to faith." (Craig Koester, Op. Cit, p. 170)

c. Will you do a thorough investigation?