

THE EASTER NARRATIVES

(The text book I used for this course is: Easter Gospels by Robert Smith, published by Augsburg Fortress – 1983. The # symbol refers to paragraphs in the Synopsis of the Four Gospels available from the American Bible Society.) Rev. Greg Kaufmann

MARK'S EMPTY TOMB ACCOUNT (16:1-8) #352

16:1

Who comes to the tomb?

Why do they come?

16:2

When did they come?

Is Mark interested in merely the time of day?

16:3, 4

Did the women have any hope of a resurrected Jesus?

Why does Mark wait until now to mention the size of the stone?

16:5

Do the women enter the tomb?

What do they see in the tomb?

What is their reaction to this young man?

Refer back to Mark 14:51-52 (#331) for another young man!

Refer to Mark 1:13 (#20) for the only other time an angel is referred to in this Gospel.

16:6

What does the young man say?

Why does he give the women all those details?

16:7

What does the young man tell the women to do?

What does Galilee imply for Mark?

What is meant by “there you will see Jesus?”

16:8

If the words of the young man are such good news, why did the women react as they did?

Do the women disobey the messenger?

Is trembling and astonishment the normal response to a word from God?

(Refer to Mark 1:22; 6:2; 10:24,26; 11:18; 12:17)
(#35) (#60) (#255) (#274) (#280)

What does Mark mean that they were afraid?

(Compare Mark’s other uses of “fear” in Mark 4:41 & 9:5-6)
(#136) (#161)

Is there a contradiction between verses 7 and 8?

(Compare the silence of the healed leper in Mark 1:44.)
(#42)

16:1-8

Is the way of the cross vindicated?

Has Jesus’ prophetic word been validated?

What is the good news for Mark’s persecuted Roman readers?

What is the good news for you?

THE EASTER NARRATIVES

Session 2

CLASS HANDOUT

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT OF THE EMPTY TOMB (MATTHEW 28:1-8) #352

27:62-66

Why does only Matthew include this detail?

What should they have been doing on the Sabbath?

How did they secure the tomb?

28:1

Why do the women come to the tomb?

Who comes?

When do they come?

28:2

Who opens the tomb?

What is the significance of a great earthquake?

28:3

Why does Matthew add all the details about the angel?

28:4

What happens to the guards?

28:5-7

Compare this message to Mark's.

28:8

Is this really any different from Mark 16:8?

28:9-10

While these verses are included in Session 3, I have also added them to Session 2 for the following reason. Why would Matthew want to sandwich the reaction of the guard and the Jewish leaders between two acts of worship by believers?

THE EASTER NARRATIVES

Session 2

LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE EMPTY TOMB (LUKE 24:1-12) #352 CLASS HANDOUT

23:56b

How do the various translations handle the sentence that begins here and ends in 24:1?

What picture do we get of the women if we leave it together?

Would these women break the Sabbath by anointing a body?

24:1

When do the women come to the tomb?

Why do they come?

How does this compare with Mark and the rest of the canonical gospels?

24:3

Contrast what the women expected to find and what they saw.

This verse reminds one of an earlier story in Luke's gospel. (2:41-52) (#12) The account of Jesus disappearance and discovery three days later in the temple is a type of foreshadowing of this empty tomb account.

24:4

How did the women react to this perplexing development?

(Compare them to Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1.) #2

Who appears to the women?

How are they described?

What is their function in this story?

Read Deut. 17:6; 19:15, and note what is necessary for testimony to the legal and acceptable.

Note how Luke uses two messengers in both the transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) (#161) and resurrection scenes; and that Jesus sends out his first messengers in pairs. (10:1) (#177)

24:5

How do these pious women react to the two angels?

What are they asked by the angels?

Is. 8:19 includes the interesting quote “Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?” Isaiah was mocking the people who visited witches in an effort to find out from the dead the will of God.

According to rabbinic tradition, Moses and Aaron had mocked Pharoh, “You fool! Does one seek the dead among the living or the living among the dead?”

24:6a

Compare this part of verse 6 with Mark 16:6 and Matthew 28:6.

24:10

Who are the women?

Note what Luke calls the 11 here.

24:11

Why does Luke say that the disciples thought it was humbug?

Compare this to Acts 17:32; 26:8.

24:12

Does your translation include this verse?

Does Peter come to faith?

How does this compare with John's version?

It is interesting to note the similarities and differences between this account and John 20:3-10.

Why would a scribe add these words to Luke?

Do the Gospels have to have the man/angel(s) say the same thing?

24:6b-7

How has Luke reworked Mark's message?

Where is the promise to meet them in Galilee?

Why does Luke omit Galilee now?

It is interesting to note that Luke omits Mark 14:28 in Luke 22:31-34. (#315).

24:8,9

Does remembering equal faith for Luke?

What do the women do?

Who do they tell it to?

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Session 2

CLASS HANDOUT

JOHN'S EMPTY TOMB ACCOUNT (John 20:1-13) #352

20:1

Who shows up at the tomb?

What does she discover?

When?

What does “dark” mean for John?

(Refer to John 6:16-17; 8:12; 12:35; 13:30)
(#147) (#243) (#302) (#310)

Why does John omit any mention of anointing Jesus here?

20:2

What is Mary's response to the empty tomb?

Who does she talk to?

Who is the “we” if she was the only one at the tomb?

20:3-5

Do they both go to the tomb?

Who gets there first?

20:6-8

What do the two disciples see in the tomb?

Who goes in first?

Why does John spend so much time describing the grave clothes?
(Compare this scene with Lazarus in John 11) (#259)

Describe the reaction of the two disciples.

20:9-10

Why the reference to understanding Scripture?

What do the two disciples do with their exciting news?

20:11

How did Mary get back at the tomb?

Compare what she does with what the two disciples just did.

20:12-13

What does Mary see?

How does that compare to the Synoptics?

What is the message of the angels?

Does it do Mary any good?

Early in John's Gospel (1:50-51) (#21) Jesus promises greater than mere earthly power. The rest of the Gospel builds our understanding that the hour of Jesus, the time of the greater things, must be the cross.

Compare the details of what Mary sees to this promise to Nathaniel.

THE EASTER NARRATIVES

Session 3

CLASS HANDOUT

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT OF THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS

Matthew 28:9-20 (#353, 354, 359)

JESUS APPEARS TO THE WOMEN

28:9-10 (#353)

Is anything new added to Matthew's empty tomb account?

What do the women do?

What does Jesus do?

Why is it inserted before the report of the guard?

THE REPORT OF THE GUARD

Matthew 28:11-15 (#354)

Only Matthew includes this scene. Why?

Why does Matthew sandwich it between two accounts depicting the worship of Jesus by the women and then by the disciples?

This scene begs to be compared with the Magi and Herod of chapter 2:1-12, (#8) and the closing scene on the Galilean mountain in 28:16-20. (#359)

All three of these scenes have authorities who wield impressive power and hold high office. All three include people who stand before them having seen signs and heard reports.

All three picture these people as seekers. Compare the responses of the rulers. Who would you choose to believe? Who will you serve?

28:11-12 (#354)

This is the second report to filter back to Jerusalem. Compare it to the first.

Compare this meeting with the ones in Matthew 26:3, 14-15, 47, 57; 27:1. (#305, 307, 331, 332, 334)

28:13-14 (#354)

What is ironic about this planned report?

Is this what religious authorities should have been doing on the Sabbath?

28:15 (#354)

Compare the response of the soldiers to the response of the disciples.

28:11-15 (#354)

Compare the tone of the end of Matthew's gospel with that of the beginning. Compare both with Luke.

JESUS APPEARS ON THE GALILEE MOUNTAIN

Matthew 28:16-20 (#359)

Why did Matthew choose to end with the words of Jesus? Why didn't he simply follow the pattern of Mark, and end with the empty tomb account? Why didn't Matthew add some pictures of the triumphant Lord and his wounds etc., as John did? Why no long list of titles? Why simply end with words from Jesus?

28:16 (#359)

Describe the setting.

Why does Matthew spend more time on the angel's description in 28:2, 3 (#352) than on Jesus' description here?

Who is with Jesus on the mountain?

28:17 (#359)

What is the significance that some doubted?

It is helpful to put this verse into the perspective of the whole gospel. Compare what Matthew says about the church elsewhere with this verse.

(22:10; 13:24-30, 36-43; 25:32-33; 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8)
(#279) (#127, #131) (#300) (#67) (#90) (#147) (#155)

28:18 (#359)

Despite their doubts, what does Jesus do?

Why does Jesus talk about authority?

Compare this scene with Luke 24:30-43 (#355, 356) and John 20:19-29. (#356, 357)

If Matthew wanted to show that Jesus had authority now that he had risen, why didn't he show it in a more dramatic fashion?

From the beginning of the gospel, Matthew has been talking about the authority of Jesus. Note for example 1:1 (#1) and 2:1-12. (#8)

Why doesn't Matthew heap titles of authority for Jesus at this point.

28:19-20 (#359)

Is this really a "great commission?"

Compare this with the sending of the 12 in Matthew 10. (#99)

28:19a (#359)

How does your translation handle "go?"

Try using "go" as a helping verb for the one main verb of the phrase (and of the book), which is "make disciples".

We might translate it as “hurry up and ...” or “get started”.

Where does the emphasis then land in this great commission? Does it land on the going, or on the making disciples of everybody?

28:19b (#359)

What does baptism do?

How does this relate to the problem in Matthew’s community?

Note the order here and in verse 20.

Does the Spirit have a separate, new mission?

Does Baptism lead to freedom from morality?

Does Baptism lead to abandonment of what Jesus taught?

Does Baptism lead to charismatic virtuosity?

Earlier in his gospel, Mathew has tied the Spirit to the Father Matt. 3:16; (#18) 10:20 (#100) and to the Son Matt. 12:18, 28 (#113). With this formula for baptism, he deftly ties the three as closely together as is possible. He did it so well we continue to use his wording to this day!

What good is baptism then?

You might find it helpful to compare Matthew 20:22-23 (#263) and Mark 10:38-39. (#263) While they certainly are parallel passages, Matthew omits any reference to baptism. Why?

28:20a (#359)

As in the previous verse, the order is terribly significant.

Who should be receiving instruction?

What should they be taught?

Where does one find all that Jesus commanded?

28:20b (#359)

What doesn't Jesus say in this final verse?

What is the point of his final message?

What is all that is needed?

What then does Jesus have to say that is so important for future generations of Christians?

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Session 3

CLASS HANDOUT

LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS

Luke 24:13-53 (#355, 356, 365)

THE EMMAUS ROAD APPEARANCE

(Part One: Luke 24:13-27) (#355)

24:13-14 (#355)

What day is it?

Who were these two?

Do you get the feeling that the disciples were beginning to scatter?

Where is Emmaus?

24:15-16 (#355)

What are the two men doing?

Why don't they recognize Jesus?

What will it take to open their eyes?

24:17 (#355)

What is the reaction of the two disciples to Jesus words?

24:18 (#355)

Who is this Cleopas?

Compare this answer with Luke's theme that Christianity is above board and respectable.

24:19-21a (#355)

How do they describe Jesus?

In their opinion what is the meaning of Jesus' death?

Who crucified Jesus?

24:21b-23 (#355)

How long has it been since Jesus died?

Did they believe the report of the women?

24:24 (#355)

Compare this verse to verse 12. (#352)

Did Peter make a solo trip?

What will it take to get them to see?

24:25-27 (#355)

On the basis of the same passages, what had Jesus' contemporaries concluded?

What does Luke mean by "it was necessary?"

How does Jesus attempt to get them to understand?

THE EMMAUS ROAD APPEARANCE

Part Two: Luke 24:28-35) (#355)

A major transition occurs here. We go from the road to the town, from walking to sitting at table, and from talking to eating.

However, Luke isn't changing topics. He is still talking about the necessity of Jesus suffering and death. He isn't introducing a new topic about the importance of the Eucharist.

I believe that this is another verse of the same song. Rome need not fear this Jesus and his church. The kingdom he is ushering in isn't a threat to Caesar, at least not in the way Caesar is thinking!

24:28-29 (#355)

Why would Jesus leave, when the two haven't yet caught on?

Does this support one of Luke's themes, namely that faith is a gradual process?

What is the significance of the term "abiding?"

24:30 (#355)

What does this meal remind you of?

Who is now the host?

This meal uses very similar vocabulary to another meal Jesus served. Compare this to the feeding of the 5000 in Luke 9:10-17. (#146)

24:31 (#355)

What is the significance of the phrase "their eyes were opened?"

What did they finally recognize?

24:32-35 (#355)

Is this still the same day?

What is your reaction to new insights gained from the study of Scripture?

What are the major lessons on the kingdom and kingship in this account?

JESUS BIDS FAREWELL TO HIS DISCIPLES

Luke 24:36-53 (356, 365)

As at the beginning of ch. 24, the scene is Jerusalem. This is apparently the same day, however, it is now early evening. While no individuals are named, Luke probably intends us to think of all Jesus' friends and disciples, including those named earlier in this chapter.

Several of the prominent features of the Emmaus narrative are present in this farewell scene. Jesus again teaches about his death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the Scripture; they again share a meal.

Be alert to any new themes.

PART ONE: Luke 24:36-49 (356, 365)

24:36-37 (#356)

Compare this scene with that in John 20:19-29. (#356, 357)

Why does Luke emphasize that the resurrection means a physical resurrection?

Why are they so frightened?

24:38 (#356)

What were the questions that you think might have plagued the disciples?

24:39 (#356)

Why does Luke mention Jesus' bones?

What is the real point in saying that it is Jesus that is alive?

24:40 (#356)

This verse should be omitted. It is included in very few manuscripts and no doubt is a scribal addition based on John 20:20. (#356)

24:41 (#356)

Why don't the disciples believe?

Compare this scene with the one in Gethsemane in Luke 22:45 (#330).

24:42-43 (#356)

Some ancient manuscripts add “and a piece of honeycomb”. Why?

Why does Jesus eat in their presence?

24:44 (#365)

To what do the Law, Prophets, and the Psalms refer?

What is the importance of this reference?

24:45 (#365)

Does Jesus open up the Scriptures or their minds?

24:46-47 (#365)

What is the sum and substance of all Scripture for Luke?

Why does Luke say that it begins in Jerusalem?

Jerusalem must be the starting point for the good news. Micah 4:2 and Isaiah 2:3 no doubt play a key role in his understanding.

24:48-49 (#365)

Remember what Luke said in his preface, Luke 1:1-4. (#1)

Does the fact that witnesses come from “Martyres” help understand this passage?

How does Luke picture the role of the Holy Spirit?

JESUS DEPARTS **Luke 24:50-53** (#365)

24:50 (#365)

When and where does this happen?

Who is with Jesus?

How are the disciples feeling now?

Compare what Jesus does with what Zechariah had left undone in Luke 1:21-22. (#2)

24:51 (#365)

This verse reflects the church's struggle with Luke-Acts once it became separated in the growing canon of the NT. Copyists struggled to reconcile it with Acts, and added or deleted as they saw fit.

24:52-53 (#365)

What has happened to the sadness and misunderstanding?

Why does Luke emphasize that they worshiped in the temple?

THE EASTER NARRATIVES

Session 3

CLASS HANDOUT

JOHN'S ACCOUNT OF THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS (JOHN 20:14-21:25)

(#353, 356, 357, 360, 366, 367)

The Gospel of John includes several appearances of Jesus. They will be handled separately in this guide. However, the picture they paint is one that is best grasped by comparing each appearance to the rest. John would have us consider what it is that links us to Jesus.

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY (JOHN 20:14-18) (#353)

20:14 (#353)

Did the message of the angels in John 20:13 (#352) do Mary any good?

20:15 (#353)

What are the implications of thinking that Jesus is a gardener?

John introduces the gardener motif in order to tie together the entire gospel. Remember that in 1:1 (#1), John brings to mind the Genesis account with the phrase “in the beginning”; now he recalls it again by having Mary think that Jesus is a gardener.

Is it mere coincidence that it is John who says that the crucifixion and resurrection took place in a garden? (John 19:41) (#350)

What additional question does Jesus ask Mary?

That question is the key question of the entire Gospel. Why?

20:16 (#353)

What is the significance of Jesus calling her by name?

Earlier in John's gospel, he says that Jesus is the good shepherd and that he knows his sheep by name (10:3) (#257). Here he calls her by name and she responds.

20:17 (#353)

Why does Jesus tell Mary not to touch him?

What does Jesus mean by ascending?

20:18 (#353)

Compare her reaction to that of the women in Mark.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES (THOMAS BEING ABSENT)

(John 20:19-23) (#356)

20:19 (#356)

Compare this scene with that in Luke 24:36-43. (#356)

What does John mean by saying they were hiding, for fear of the Jews?

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES (THOMAS BEING PRESENT)

20:24 (#357)

Why does John include this extra appearance account?

Do the Synoptics recount an appearance to only 10?

What kind of guy is Thomas?

He has shown up previously in John 11:16 and 14:15.

(#259) (#317)

20:25 (#357)

Note what the other 10 disciples do.

Why does Thomas demand signs?

20:26-27 (#357)

Why the details again of the closed door?

Note how Jesus delivers peace to Thomas.

20:28-29 (#357)

Why didn't Thomas say "I believe!" instead of "My Lord and my God?"

Who is Jesus calling blessed?

What is the significance of Jesus first words to his fearful disciples?

Jesus had promised earlier in John's gospel to gather them all to himself and give them his peace. (John 14:27; (#319) 16:33 (#328) Now he is pictured doing exactly that. He can penetrate their locked hearts and their walls of fear.

20:20 (#356)

Why the emphasis on his body?

20:21 (#356)

Why does Jesus repeat his opening greeting of peace?

What does their task remind you of?

20:22 (#356)

Does this remind you of the Acts 2 Pentecost event?

What does it mean that Jesus "breathed out" on them?

The Greek verb used for "breathed out" is the exact one used in Genesis 2:7 in the creation of Adam, and in Ezekiel 37:9 in the vision of the dry bones.

John 7:39 (#240) promised the Paraclete, and now he delivers.

JOHN 20:30-31 THE CONCLUSION (#366)

It certainly sounds as if this is the conclusion to the Gospel of John.

The question of what or whom you are seeking has been answered. The nature of Christian faith has been described. The connection between generations has been spelled out.

The book is complete; the Jesus who died is now resurrected and available to all. The disciples are established as the first in a long line of co-workers with Christ.

John concludes by saying that he could have included much more, but that the selection is sufficient for the task. His book will be able to do for future generations what the words and deeds of Jesus did for the first generation of believers. It can move people to ask faithful questions, and offers them faithful, truthful answers.

However the gospel has one more chapter! What the relationship is between ch. 21 and the rest of John is a subject that is far broader than the scope of this class. I will suggest a few of the concerns that are raised and offer at least one reason for its addition to the gospel. I encourage you to read Raymond Brown's exhaustive treatment of the subject in volume II of his commentary on John.

JOHN CHAPTER 21: WHY?

At first glance ch. 21 sounds a lot more like the Synoptics than the rest of the book. It has many parallels to them, while most of the major motifs of John are missing. Where in chapter 21 can you find:

- ☒ The cross of Jesus as his exaltation
- ☒ The oneness of God's children springing from the dying of Jesus
- ☒ Mutual indwelling of Father and Son with believers
- ☒ The Paraclete leading into all truth
- ☒ Enmity between church and world
- ☒ The dualisms of light and dark, love and hate, truth and falsehood
- ☒ The unique sonship of Jesus
- ☒ Present possession of eternal life
- ☒ Jesus as fulfiller of Jewish institutions or festivals.

In addition to the above, ch. 21 relates rather awkwardly with ch. 20. It certainly isn't the climax of the preceding chapter!

Why are the disciples fishing as though there had been no empty tomb, no vision of angels, no appearances in the upper room, no outpouring of the Paraclete, and no high commission?

One last comment needs to be made, before suggesting why chapter 21 was added to the gospel. While it is true that John loves symbolism, it appears to run wild in ch. 21; almost to the point of making it difficult to determine if we are to take any of the details as accurate events. Chapter 21 includes symbolic details such as:

- ☒ 7 disciples
- ☒ fishing
- ☒ the right side of the boat
- ☒ 153 large fish

- ☒ unsplit net
- ☒ meal of bread and fish
- ☒ the third appearance
- ☒ sheep and lambs
- ☒ and being girded and led.

So, why chapter 21?

I believe that it answers a unique problem within the Johannine community. John's message ended with chapter 20. However, when John died, doubts didn't. They began to wonder if they had actually lost that connecting link to Jesus. They felt abandoned and orphaned once again. Why did John die before the end came? Hadn't Jesus promised that he wouldn't!

Once John was gone, it might have lead some of the members of the community to leave and join others that stressed more obvious links to Jesus, such as sacramental connections, or charismatic hook-ups. John's supposed premature death might have plunged them into a gloom that resembled that of the first disciples as they contemplated life without Jesus.

To answer these unique concerns, one of John's disciples added chapter 21 and then edited the entire book to answer this question.

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES BY THE SEA OF TIBERIAS (JOHN 21:1-14) (#367)

21:1 (#367)

How much time has elapsed since events noted in ch. 20?

Compare this verse to 2:11. (#22)

21:2 (#367)

Why 7 disciples?

21:3 (#367)

Why were they fishing?

Compare this scene with Luke 5:1-11. (#41)

21:4 (#367)

Why didn't they recognize Jesus?

21:5 (#367)

What does Jesus call the disciples?

21:6 (#367)

Compare Jesus' command here and Matthew 7:7-8. (#70)

21:7 (#367)

Note how the role of Peter changes. Why?

21:8 (#367)

Compare this account of bringing in the catch with that in Luke.

21:9 (#367)

Why mention the detail of the charcoal fire?

21:10 (#367)

Why did Jesus ask for some of their fish?

*It might prove enlightening to look at the following
references in John. (14:12; 15:5, 16; 17:20-21)
(#317) (#320, 321) (#329)*

21:11 (#367)

What is the significance of the untorn net?

What is the significance of the number and size of the fish?

*Since the catch of fish is comprised only of keepers, then one might consider that
very good news (Matthew 13:48 (#133) sheds interesting light on this idea.)*

21:12 (#367)

How has the situation changed for the disciples?

21:13 (#367)

What picture do we have of Jesus in verses 11-13?

21:14 (#367)

Count up the number of appearances so far in John?

What happened to Mary?

PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE
JOHN 21:15-25 (#367)

21:15-17 (#367)

Why does Jesus ask Peter three times?

How does this relate to John's theme about discipleship?

What does shepherding mean for John?

21:18-19 (#367)

How would Peter be bound?

21:20-23 (#367)

Contrast the Beloved Disciple and Peter.

Why repeat a misunderstood saying of Jesus?

21:24-25 (#367)

What is our link to God?

Appearances Of Jesus

Luke

24:13-53

To Whom?

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message:

MATTHEW

28:9-20

To Whom?

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message:

John

20:14-21:25

To Whom?

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message:

MARK 16:1-8

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message:

LUKE 24:1-12

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message:

MATTHEW 28:1-8

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message:

JOHN 20:1-13

When?

Who comes?

What do they find?

The message: