

MATTHEW 28; MARK 16; LUKE 24; JOHN 20–21

JESUS' RESURRECTION: SURPRISED BY JOY

INTRODUCTION

The last chapters of each of the four Gospels focus on Jesus' resurrection and His commission for all disciples to spread this 'good news' (the original root word for gospel).¹ Jesus' triumph over death is the greatest news ever given on earth. The Gospels unitedly proclaim that the first witnesses of this truth were women. The Lord deliberately and repeated called His female disciples to act as the first voice for this message. They saw angels and the Lord Himself who commissioned them to carry this message to the brethren and apostles. (This order was also seen in the birth narratives, and we will continue to find other similarities between the two accounts.) This empowering call set a standard of change in Christianity whereby both women and men were called to

mutually serve by testifying, preaching, and prophesying to build Jesus' church on earth.² The message of Jesus' redemption and resurrection is the central theme of Christ's restored church and scripture, including the Book of Mormon.³

THE EMPTY TOMB

Guards at the Tomb

Matthew 27:62-66

We start with the scene with the guards at the tomb from Matthew 27:62-66 and Matthew 28, because Matthew crafted a chiasmus about the guards bridging the two last chapters. Matthew mentions the guards three times, at the beginning and end, as well as at the center of the chiasmus, "showing that the main emphasis of the whole passage rests on them."⁴ An overview of the three passages about the guards was artistically organized:

27:62-66	The guards at the tomb
28:1	The women on their way to the tomb
28:2-4	The angel and the guards
28:5-8	The angel and the women at the tomb
28:11-15	The testimony of the bribed guards

The Gospel of Matthew's text is arranged this way probably for his apologetic purpose. The guards' false testimony obviously swayed many and pacified others. In Matthew's text, he wanted the facts to speak for themselves.

Matthew 27:62-64 "the next day . . . command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day" Matthew includes the Pharisees' concern about guarding Jesus' tomb. They are so zealous that they even break their Sabbath traditions to go ask Pilate to hire Roman guards to protect Jesus' tomb from robbers. The scripture says this happened on the next day, which would have included the first Passover night just after sunset. Like those who mocked Jesus earlier, these Pharisees knew that Jesus had said He would rise the third day. This became quite ironic as the unbelievers all remembered Jesus' promise to die and rise again in three days, but the disciples were shocked by His death, and flabbergasted when He rose again.

Matthew 27:65-66 "Ye have a watch . . . make it as sure as ye can" With great irony, Matthew includes "make [the tomb] sure," three times. To make it "sure" meant to seal it with your individual ring or signet pressed into wax, clay, or metal. One sealed a tomb with a stone but making the seal "sure" required adding guards to watch the stone. Because the Pharisees asked Pilate for the guard, we assume Pilate sent the Roman Praetorium sol-

diers. A Roman prefect, like Pilate, usually had a Roman Praetorium guard at his disposal. In light of the Passover setting in Jerusalem, with its enormous crowds and nationalistic emotions, as well as the uproar from Jesus' thousands of supporters, Pilate probably sent some of the most experienced soldiers to guard the tomb and maintain order.

The Praetorium guards were extremely disciplined and were governed by strict rules. Pilate may have sent a sixteen-man unit (as it was to guard Peter in Acts 12:4), or many times that number. Making a sure seal included:

Each member was responsible for six square feet of space. The guard members could not sit down or lean against anything while they were on duty. If a guard member fell asleep, he was beaten and burned with his own clothes. But he was not the only one executed; the entire sixteen-man guard unit was executed if only one of the members fell asleep while on duty.⁵

Some suggest that four guards took four-hour shifts, but all this speculation depends on how many soldiers Pilate sent. The point that Matthew makes next is that their assignment to guard the tomb turned into a big failure. Even if they were the best Roman soldiers, and the most "sure seal" Rome could muster, they crumbled in the face of God's power.

Women First Witnesses of Jesus' Empty Tomb

Matthew 26:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18

Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1 "When the Sabbath was past . . . very early in the morning of the first day of the week" All four Gospels share that this is the first day of the week. From this point on, Sunday became the Christian Sabbath as the resurrection became the central day in the history of the world. Christians



The Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Master Francke, 1430. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

still honor their Sabbath as a day of rest after the pattern of the Creation, but most Christians reverence the Sabbath as the first day of the week even more because of the resurrection.

“it was yet dark” John suggests that it was between 3 and 6 a.m. or possibly later if a dark fog remained. They still had plenty of moonlight as two nights prior on Passover there was a full moon. The darkness could be figurative too (which John uses often), as the women were filled with darkness and confusion within as well as without. Matthew and Mark recorded it was shortly before dawn. These minor variances in the story line are normal for oral history that is passed down, especially from those who were not eye-witnesses.

“Mary Magdalene” John only initially mentions one woman, Mary Magdalene, at the tomb, but then uses the plural for the women. Even with more than one woman, he wants to highlight Mary Magdala (Mary’s second name suggests that she was from the wealthy city of Magdala on the Northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, about 7 miles Southwest of Jesus’ mission headquarters in Capernaum). It would have been very odd for a single woman to have gone to a place of execution outside the city wall in the dark. Matthew adds another Mary as her companion. Mark adds Salome to the two Mary’s. Luke fills in all the women at the cross on the eve of the Passover, plus adds even more women joining this band of intrepid mourning women.

Luke 24:1b “the women came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.” In the Pharisaic culture, women were discouraged from going out in public, but these women could not be contained.⁶ Their oral laws also strictly limited what they could and could not do on the Sabbath.⁷ Although they could not anoint a deceased body, they could spend at least part of their Sabbath preparing anointments and spices. So before dawn they crept out on the dark and quiet streets to retrace their steps to the garden where they had seen the servants of Joseph of Arimathea lay Jesus’ body (Luke 23:55–56).

The same traditions limited where they could go, what they could wear in public, and who they could talk to. This small group of shrouded women slowly and quietly wound their way through the streets of Jerusalem to retrace their steps down the main road—slowly, because they carried the heavy load of ointments. They would have been draped in a fabric covering them from head to foot, not only because it was still chilly in the wee hours of the morning, but also because they were outside of their homes. In Jerusalem, Jewish women at that time were to stay indoors as much as possible. But, if they ventured out, they mostly completely covered themselves, including wearing a veil over their faces. As the women carefully crept down the narrow dark passageways, I presume they worried about disturbing those sleeping in corners and alleyways, public squares, and on roof tops. Nearly every available space was filled with visiting pilgrims.⁸

Even though the scriptures do not record their feelings, I assume they were in deep mourning and frightened as they retraced their steps past Golgotha and smelled the same smells. Their minds must have recalled the events of



The Resurrection Morning by J. H. Hartley, 1929.

J. H. HARTLEY



Angels Declare That Jesus Is Risen From the Dead by William Hole, 1905.

three days earlier, walking along the same road where the Roman soldiers had dragged Jesus, bruised-and-bleeding from Pilate’s scourging, to His crucifixion. I assume the women comforted each other as they stumbled along toward the garden sepulcher.

Matthew 28:2–4 “. . . a great earthquake, . . . an angel . . . rolled away the stone” Matthew explains how the stone was moved—a combination of a natural disaster—an earthquake—and a divine being coming down to move the stone. The account gives a dramatic arrival of an angel, whose shining appearance scared the guards so that they fainted or “became as dead men,” or as the Anchor Bible translates it, “paralyzed with fright.”⁹

God uses “earthquakes” as a means to speak to mankind many times in scripture (i.e. Alma the Younger, Saul/Paul). The miracle of God’s intervention is in the timing of the earthquake. This is the first time in Matthew’s Gospel since the nativity narrative that “the angel of the Lord” is mentioned. Most angelic visitations in scripture are described as having dazzling, shining clothes and faces.

Matthew 28:5; Luke 24:5 “Do not be afraid” In scripture, angels sometimes begin their dialogues by telling their audiences not to be frightened (for example, Luke’s angelic visitations in the birth narratives, Luke 1–2). Luke describes the women’s reaction as “terrified and bowing their faces to the ground.” But the angel assures them, “I know that you are looking for Jesus,” and then invites them to come and see the empty tomb. These devoted disciples, the Galilean women, who had been ministering to Jesus throughout His ministry, were now rewarded with being the first to hear the Good News, or *Gospel* (Luke 8:2).

Luke’s Gospel, includes a description of “two men . . . in shining garments.” Two is significant as they act as a double witness, fulfilling the requirement from the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). The JST changes each account to include plural angels. The JST also changed Luke’s shiny dressed men to angels, which give us

a good visual image of what these angels looked like. We do not know who these two sentinel witnesses were, but the Lord taught Joseph Smith that every angel who ministers to this world, lived or will live as a mortal on it (D&C 130:5).

The different Gospels paint a paradoxical contrast between the brave soldiers who passed out (Matthew 28:4), and the frightened women who walked into the tomb (Luke 24:3). This sepulcher was fancier than the normal shaft tombs of the time. Archeologists have found several different types and sizes of tombs in ancient Palestine, including larger two-chamber tombs like the one described in these verses. The two rooms had different purposes. The first entrance was a place to prepare the body and for mourning; the second was where the body lay for a period before the bones were gathered and placed together with older family bones. The mourning was laced with Jewish ritual.¹⁰

“Why seek ye the living among the dead?” Eric Huntsman’s translation emphasizes a new title for the Lord with a capitalization: **“the Living with the dead?”**¹¹ The Aramaic Bible also emphasizes this announcement as a different new title for Jesus, “Why are you seeking The Life among the dead?” Jesus used that title for Himself in Bethany as he comforted Mary and Martha at their brother’s death, “I am the resurrection and the life . . . I am the one who brings people back to life, and I am life itself” (John 11:25).¹² Jesus began His role as the source of life as the Creator of the world. Now He has become the source of immortal life (Moses 1:39).

Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:7 “Go quickly and tell His disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead’” An angel called the women to be the first witnesses of the resurrection. They were to tell the apostles and other disciples gathered in Jerusalem the joyous news. This is another connection with the birth narratives where Mary, Elizabeth, and the “prophetess Anna” become witnesses (Luke 1:11, 29; 2:9). This call for women to witness was a revolutionary difference from the Judean culture of the day. Normally, women were not allowed to speak as a witness in a legal setting except in a few rare exceptions. In fact, it was preferred that they did not speak to men at all.¹³ Christ, the apostles, and these angels raised the role of women to not only testify by bearing their witnesses, but also to take an active role in building God’s kingdom on earth.¹⁴ Throughout the Gospels, we find repeated examples of Jesus honoring women and raising their social status; now that same pattern continues after His resurrection. By combining both accounts from the cross and tomb, we get a more accurate picture of which women were there.

TABLE 1: WOMEN AT THE CROSS AND TOMB

Cross: Matt 27:56	Mark 15:40	John 19:25	
Tomb: Matt 28:1	Mark 16:1	Luke 24:10	
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
Mary mother of James & Joseph	Mary mother of James & Jose	Mary of James	Mary wife of Cleopas
Mother of the sons of Zebedee	Salome wife of Zebedee	Other women	Jesus' mother's sister
		Joanna wife of Chuza	Jesus' mother

Women Go to Tell the Disciples

Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:8b; Luke 24:9; John 20:2

John 20:2 “She runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple . . . we know not” At that early hour, Mary Magdalene probably awakened them, but she used the plural “we” suggesting there were others with her. Mary Magdalene is the main character in John’s resurrection account, definitely. For her, the open and empty tomb meant that the body had been stolen. Grave robberies were enough of a troublesome concern that an imperial edict addressed the problem.¹⁵ Mary Magdalene’s story tweaked Peter’s curiosity enough that he and John (“the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”), bolted to check it out for themselves. The synoptic account includes the women going to find the apostles together.

Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:8b; Luke 24:9–11; “they departed quickly. . . with fear and great joy” The ISV translates Matthew’s recollections of the women, “terrified but also ecstatic,” and Mark includes “they trembled and were amazed” or “bewildered” (BSB), but Luke and John avoid their emotions. The fact that the woman knew where the apostles were suggests they had been together at some point since Jesus’ death.

What would it have felt like for the apostles to have received this news from women? With the earliness of the hour, the women may have awoken the apostles. Much to my surprise, the women’s excitement was met with skepticism. The Lord’s choice of witnesses required the brethren to replace cultural ideas about gender superiority,¹⁶ to learn new skills, and to humble themselves to hear God’s choice of witnesses.¹⁷ They honestly recorded that it was hard for them to believe the women. Either due to cultural baggage about women witnessing or a bad

memory, Mark recorded, “They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.” Luke is probably more accurate as he painfully recorded that when the women told the eleven apostles, “their words seemed like idle tales and they believed them not” (Luke 24:11). Yet the Gospels of Luke and John then go on to tell that their story peeked Peter’s curiosity and he ran to see for himself.

TABLE 2: RESURRECTED LORD’S APPEARANCES ON EASTER SUNDAY

Matt 28:9–10	Mark 16:9–14, or 18	Luke 24:13–48	John 20:11–23
	*Mary Magdalene		
*Women from tomb (questionable timing)	*Two as they walked	*Two going to Emmaus (Cleopas and disciple)	
		*Simon Peter	
	Eleven at supper (probably next week)	*To a room full of disciples in Jerusalem, ate fish and honeycomb	*Evening room of disciples in Jerusalem, Breathed the Spirit

*Scripture verifies it happened on the first day of the week or the same day of Jesus’ resurrection.

Jesus Appears to Women

Matthew 28:9–10

Matthew 28:9–10 “Jesus met them. . . be not afraid: go tell my brethren . . . go into Galilee” These two verses insert that as the women were following through with the angel’s instructions to tell the disciples of the empty tomb, Jesus appeared to them, and gave them the same instructions. A close look shows that these two verses may have been adjusted at some point. First, because they interrupt Matthew’s chiastic outline mentioned above. Second, because they contradict Mark’s and John’s claims that Mary Magdalene was the first witness.¹⁸ Third, because they contradict John 21:11–17, where Jesus did not allow the first witness to touch Him. Fourth, because Mark, Luke, and John say that the disciples were informed and Peter found the tomb empty before Lord made His first appearance. Taking these into consideration, it appears at best, that these two verses were adjusted somehow, and at worst, added by a later editor trying to harmonize the angel’s message (from Mark 16:7) to go to Galilee.



Peter and John Hasten to the Sepulchre by William Hole, 1905.

Report of the Guard

Matthew 28:11–15

Matthew 28:11–15 “the guard . . . told the chief priests . . . they gave a sum of money . . . tell people . . . disciples . . . stole him away” In Matthew’s Gospel, this is the last leg of his chiasmus centered on the guards (see Matthew 27:62). The Pharisees’ attempt to guard the tomb turned into a fiasco. The chief priests covered it up with money. The bribe broke the Roman law that required the guards who dozed or lost the object they were to protect to be killed.¹⁹ Matthew included that this false story was still believed when he wrote many years after the fact, which must have been a frustrating stumbling block to those early missionaries.

Peter and John Run to the Empty Tomb

Luke 24:12; John 20:3–10

Luke 24:12a; John 20:3–4 “Peter . . . and that other disciple . . . ran both together” After all Peter had to regret over the last three days, he still acted in typical Peter fashion, and he was man who jumped up and ran to see.²⁰

“the other disciples did outrun Peter, and came first . . .”

The author must have been smiling when he added the winner of the foot race. (Especially since this is the only account that includes the other apostle; Luke 24:12 has only Peter running to the tomb). While John waited, enthusiastic, impulsive Peter kept running right into the tomb.

Luke 24:12b; John 20:5–7 “stooping down, he beheld the linen cloths laid by themselves, and departed, wondering . . .” By stooping down, the two men could have seen through the small opening into the tomb. It was empty. No angels were there to explain as there had been for the women. I imagine that the apostle’s hearts softened and they began to believe the women’s witnesses. In the economy of heaven, we must learn to allow the Spirit to testify of other’s words (D&C 46:13–14).

Seeing the linen clothing was evidence that the body was not stolen. (A robber would have taken the clothes or wrappings with the body, and certainly would not have taken the time to unwrap it and carry a naked, oozing corpse). John includes that the linen clothes were wrapped together, with the head bandage or handkerchief lay-

ing separately. The scene teaches that the resurrected Jesus no longer needed His mortal clothing. What He now wears is not of mortal making, but are heavenly robes of righteousness.

John 20:8–9 “**yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise . . .**” Perhaps seeing the clothing was enough to warrant John’s belief that Jesus had risen. Yet John points out that they didn’t understand the scriptures that spoke of the resurrection. In the Old Testament, in addition to the sign of Jonah 1:17, which the Lord cited repeatedly, we find two other scriptural promises of this event: Hosea 6:2, “After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight;” Psalms 16:10, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

John 20:10 “. . . **went away again unto their own homes**” What did “own home” mean? Did the Galilean apostles have relatives in the area? Could they have a rented a place that became their home later? More probably, they went to John Mark’s mother’s home (another Mary!), as this home became a Christian meeting place later in Acts 12:12.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

Mark 16:9; John 20:11–17

John 20:11 “**Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping**” The two apostles left, but in her pain and confusion, Mary could not leave the spot. With the sorrow that only those who have experienced the death of loved one can understand, she could not bring herself to leave Jesus’ tomb. She had stayed at the cross (John 19:25), she had stayed for the burial (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47), and now she stayed by the empty tomb. For her it is still the darkest morning of her life, and grief clouded her ability to understand what had happened. She walked over to the opening of the tomb, “stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher.”

John 20:12 “**two angels . . . one at the head, and the other at the feet**” As Mary looked inside, she remembered seeing two angels, but her witness, reaction, or emotions are not what is emphasized here. Rather, the author includes the angel’s position. The hewn rock shelf where the body had laid was wide and tall enough for two angels to sit at either end. It appears that she did not comprehend what she saw. But John’s description resembles the description of the angels in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 37:6–8).

In Moses’ Tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies *the only piece of furniture was the gold box*, known as the “ark of the testament” or covenant. It was covered with a gold lid, carved with two angels on either end facing each other. It was called “the mercy seat” and it represented the throne of God (Exodus 25:17–22). God’s throne is merciful because of Jesus’ atoning gift of Redemption. The most merciful gift in eternity is His resurrection. In a sense, the mercy seat foreshadowed this scene of the empty tomb with the two angels on either end.

Jesus Reveals Himself to Mary Magdalene by William Hole, 1905.



John 20:13 “Woman, why weepest thou?” In Mary’s state of sorrow, she did not understand that the angel’s brief dialogue could have continued and answered her devastation. Instead she turned from them in confusion. I presume this happens to all of us who do not recognize the angels (both from heaven and earth) that the Lord sends to help us.

John 20:14 “she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not recognize . . .” With her face probably still veiled, and her eyes blurred from tears, she could not have seen clearly. She would soon realize that this was the first of four-resurrection appearances of Jesus that John recorded in his Gospel. It is also the beginning of Jesus’ “forty-day ministry,” which spanned from Easter morning to His ascension on the Mount of Olives as recorded in Acts 1:3–11.

John 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Jesus repeated the angel’s question. Again, John records Jesus as addressing a female with the respectful title, “woman/*gune*,” just as he had his mother at the wedding of Cana (John 2:4), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7–42), and the woman taken in adultery (John 8:9–10). We see a similar pattern in other Gospels (i.e. Matthew 15:28; Luke 13:12). John will refer to Mary by her own name in a moment, but perhaps this reference to “woman,” hearkens back to Genesis with Eve as the first “woman” (Genesis 2:22). Just as Eve’s life blessed all living and especially affected her daughters, so too will Mary’s experience be a blessing to all humanity, and a special gift to all women. Whatever His motive, it was polite way to address her (John 19:26).

John 20:15 “whom seekest thou?” Jesus asked Mary the question that the angel had asked her. The question was to help her recognize Him. It’s a good question for all disciples to answer, and in so doing we will find Him more easily. But, in her distracted and confused state of mourning, I can understand why she would not have recognized Jesus’ voice. She certainly was not expecting Him.

“She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if . . .” The sun was probably up by then, and after a long double holiday, she probably assumed the gardeners had arrived to start their pruning, weeding, and watering in the cool of the morning. In between her sobs, I presume she called out to one of them for any information about Jesus’ body, “. . . where have you laid Him?” But when the Gardener answered her, He called her by name, “Mary.”²¹ There was something powerful in this recognition—One from the other side of the veil called another by name to bring her into a realm of greater light.

John 20:16 “Mary” Mary in Hebrew is “*Mariam*,” Moses’ sister’s name. It was not until Jesus called her by name that she “turned” and recognized Him. Can you imagine what that sounded like to her? Jesus called her by name, just as He will do for each of us. Mary Magdalene was honored as the first witness of the resurrected Lord. Similarly, the young virgin Mary was the first witnesses of the Messiah’s birth (And the first witness to receive a visit

from Angel Moroni with the golden plates, was another woman with the same first name, Mary Whitmer²²). The key is to recognize Him and to know His voice.

“She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni” The New Testament includes this honorific title twice—here and by a blind man pleading with Jesus for sight (Mark 10:51). The extra suffix added onto Rabbi has been interpreted as an intensifier of a master or teacher, as well as meaning, “my great one,” “honorable sir”²³ or “my dear Rabbi.”²⁴

John 20:17 “Touch me not” Jesus may have meant “don’t detain me” or “don’t embrace me.” Elsewhere the translation of *haptomai* also means: “cohabitation.”²⁵ This appears to have been a short-term issue, as two other visits Jesus made that day included the women in Matthew 28:9–10, and ten apostles in John 20:19, who all touched Him.

“for I am not yet ascended to my Father” Jesus spent three days and nights in the spirit world organizing missionary work (1 Peter 4:6; D&C 138:19, 30). By combining these scriptures, it makes sense that Jesus needed to go to His Father in order to report before others could touch Him, as they did later. There must have been another change to His body or something important about the timing between this visit and the other visits later that day.

“Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father” It is noteworthy that Jesus gave Mary a message to relay to the apostles. Peter and John had just been at the tomb a few minutes earlier, but neither the Lord, nor any angels, appeared to them. Jesus intentionally chose Mary to be His first witness and for her to deliver a message to them.

John 20:18 “Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples” By delivering the message this way (from Jesus to Mary to the apostles), He taught an important lesson to the apostles about women in His church. They were to be honored and trusted, given a voice, and given permission to represent the Lord as witnesses. Jesus made an abrupt and dramatic change from the Pharisaic cultural view of women. The Gospel of John records Mary’s obedience and errand, but not the apostle’s disbelief as Mark did.

Mark 16:9–11 “Mary Magdalene . . . told them . . . and they . . . believed not” The Gospel of Mark gives a shorter account without the conversation, just the sad reality that at least some that she told did not believe her. This adds an interesting perspective to Thomas’ doubting. It also demonstrates how far the early writers would have had to change their perspective in order to include her story in the text as the valid first witness.

MORE WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples on Road to Emmaus

Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35

Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-16 “He appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked . . .” Also, on Sunday morning, two disciples left Jerusalem to walk to a village, Emmaus (which is no longer identified for sure, although a few modern towns have historical claims to the old village that are four to seventeen miles from Jerusalem). The week following the Passover was the week-long celebration of “Unleavened Bread” (Leviticus 23:5-6). Many Jews did not travel during that holy week but stayed in Jerusalem (Acts 20:6). For whatever reason, it appears that the three men walking to Emmaus were not disturbed by crowds.

As they talked of the amazing events of the past few days, Jesus joined them, but not in a recognizable form. The NIV of Luke 24:16 reads, “they were kept from recognizing him,” and the JST adds, “their eyes were . . . *covered* that they *could* not know him.”

Luke 24:17-24 “What are you discussing so intently . . . with sadness . . .” Jesus joined in the conversation, to reason with them. (He tries to do the same with us according to Isaiah 1:18.) His first question dealt with their sadness. The two disciples admitted that they knew of the women’s witness of angels at the tomb, but their sadness showed that they did not believe it.

“**Cleopas**” One of the two men may have been the source of the conversation for Luke. It was probably Cleopas/Clopas, as Luke knew his name.²⁶ Cleopas may have been the same person as Clopas, married to one of the Mary’s mentioned at the cross and tomb (John 19:25; and Table 1 above).²⁷ Their conversation assures us that Jesus’ death and resurrection was well known in Jerusalem that weekend. They assumed due to his lack of knowledge that their fellow traveler (Jesus) must have been from out of town.

Luke 24:25-26 “O foolish ones, how slow are your hearts to believe . . . ?” (BSB). Jesus sees His Messiahship in a different light than others do. I’m fascinated at how Luke continues to tie the birth and death together by giving two more “outside” witnesses, paralleling Luke’s “outside” witnesses of Simeon and Anna at the Temple.

Luke 24:27-28 “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets . . . things concerning himself” Even without Jesus walking beside us, now with many scriptures available to us, we can find “types and shadows” of the Messiah in the details of the Mosaic Laws, the Tabernacle/Temple structure and ritual, and even the very lives of the proph-

ets (Hosea 12:10; 1 Corinthians 10:1–11; etc.). The Law was to act as a “schoolmaster” to lead them to Christ (Galatians 3:24). We find this perspective especially repeated throughout the pages of the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 11:4; Mosiah 3:15; 13:10, 31; Alma 13:16; 25:15; 33:19; etc.).

Luke 24:29–30 “Abide with us: for it is toward evening” When the trio arrived at Emmaus, the disciples constrained their guest to join them for the evening meal. Two sacred meals are mentioned twice in this chapter as places and times of enlightenment (Luke 24:35). Jesus took the unleavened bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces and gave it to them. Our hope is that our sacrament services can be as revelatory. (The men’s recognition happened at the “breaking of bread,” which hints at the possibility that these two men, although not apostles, may have been present or helping at the Last Supper.²⁸)

Luke 24:31–32 “Their eyes were opened” The veil over their eyes finally lifted. Luke uses the verb, “open/*dianoigo*.” This is the second time the author uses this word since Mary’s birth cleansing sacrifice at the Temple (referring to the first-born’s opening of a mother’s body, Luke 2:23). Luke continues to link the birth and death, in part to emphasize the *new birth* that the resurrection provides.

Road to Emmaus by Robert Zünd, 1877. Image via Wikimedia Commons.



Luke 24:32 “Did not our hearts burn within us?” They remembered that as Jesus had taught on the road they had felt a warmth. This is a sign of how we are taught to recognize truth in our dispensation. It was one of the first lessons Joseph and Oliver were taught on how to identify the Spirit in D&C 9:7–9.²⁹ The JST adds a plural to include all our hearts. This is part of the baptism of fire. When we are born again it includes the Spirit’s witness and the Spirit’s immersion to cleanse and change our hearts.

Mark 16:13; Luke 24:33–35 “they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem . . .” When the two men returned quickly to Jerusalem, they went the place where the eleven apostles (and probably others) were gathered. As they shared their story, they witnessed about what had come to them during the “breaking of bread.” Luke includes the happy news that Simon Peter had also seen the Lord (as did Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5). But, Mark’s Gospel only records that “neither believed they them.”

Jesus’ Visitation to the Disciples

Luke 24:36–48; John 20:19–23; possibly Mark 16:14

Luke 24:36; John 20:19 “at evening . . . when the doors were shut . . . where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews . . .” This Sunday evening gathering is usually thought of as just the ten apostles, yet no author limits the group to just apostles or to ten (Mark alone gives a number, and he says “the eleven were gathered,” which does not mean others were not there. I think Mark’s account sounds more like Jesus visitation a week later when Thomas was there). Luke’s account suggests that the two men who ran back from Emmaus are still present sharing their story. John sounds as if many disciples had locked themselves together—which would have included the women who came back to this room at sunrise. Harmonizing these three accounts is problematic (Mark contradicts John), but it is safe to say, the group included at least the ten apostles and probably other believers.

“Peace be unto you” Jesus’ greeting alleviated their fear, “*shalom*/peace.” He repeated the greeting in the next sentence. He had uttered the same promise earlier at the Last Supper, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:27).

Luke 24:38 “Why are you troubled?” Again, Luke uses words at the death that are only found in the birth accounts tying the two together. (Zacharias and Mary were also “troubled” when Angel Gabriel came; Luke 1:12, 29).

Luke 24:39 “. . . it is I Myself; touch Me and see . . . flesh and bones” Jesus invited the room of disciples to come and touch his hands and feet, as He would do at the Temple in Bountiful in about a year (3 Nephi 11:14–15).³⁰ We assume that resurrected bodies have flesh and bones without blood.

John 20:20 “. . . then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord” This verse brings a new level of meaning to the word “glad.” It is also translated, “overjoyed” (NIV), and “rejoiced” (BSB). They were all able to touch Him and examine the nail prints and side wound just as the Nephites would do almost a year later when He visited the New World in 3 Nephi 11:15.

John 20:21 “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” This verse is especially interesting when we remember that *apostle* means “*one sent*.” Jesus’ commission, from the Father to the Son, used the word, “sent/*apostello*,” but from the Son to the disciples, used “I send/*pempo* you.” John never uses the word “apostle” in his Gospel, nor in his epistles (only in the Book of Revelation). He either uses the “twelve” (John 6:67), or “disciples.” With “disciples” we are not sure when it refers to all believers or the select twelve. From this time forward, the special witnesses are those to whom the resurrected Lord shows himself and commissions to witness of Him.³¹

Luke 24:45–48 “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” Just as He did on the Road to Emmaus, the Lord uses the scriptures to explain His mission and life. This is the first time Jesus referred to himself as “The Messiah” (or Christ in Greek). The Old Testament includes many anointed things (temple altar, brazen sea, priests, etc.), but *the promised* Messiah, was what the others were all pointing towards.

Luke 24:49 “tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” I appreciate many translations, including the NIV, ESV, and BSB that change “endued / endowed” to “clothe.” Endowing with power is clothing in the “robes of righteousness” (2 Nephi 4:33; 9:14). We do not know exactly when this event fit into the forty-day ministry, but the Lord clothed and empowered the disciples on the day of Pentecost with the Spirit (Acts 1–2). The Christian branch of Jerusalem were empowered and as a result were highly active for the next two decades until the persecution drove them out (Acts 1:12; 12:25; 25: Romans 15:25; Galatians 2:1; etc.).

Luke 24:53 “continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen” Luke begins and ends his Gospel in the temple (starting with Zacharias and ending with the disciples). The early Christians were endowed with the Spirit and blessed to work for their same Master as He directed the church from the other side of the veil. Luke begins his second volume of the Apostolic church in the book of Acts. Each Gospel has a different ending.

Jesus Gives the Holy Spirit

John 20:22–23

John 20:22 “He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” Jesus’ “breathing/*emphusao*” on them echoes Genesis 2:7 when “*Yahweh Elohim*/Lord God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and [Adam] became a living soul.” Just as the original Creation was completed by the breath of God, so too, the new creation is completed by the breath of the Creator. John also uses a word play with “breath/*pneuma*,” which can be trans-

lated as “breath, spirit, or wind.” John recorded the same word play with Nicodemus in John 3:5–8, using spirit/*pneuma*. When a similar event was recorded in 3 Nephi 18:36–7, the Lord gave the apostles authority to confirm the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, not by breath.

Up to this point, all four Gospels have mentioned the Spirit, but only in conjunction with Jesus (see the Nativity accounts, Luke 1:15, the Baptism Mark 1:9–12, etc.). The twelve have demonstrated the power of God by casting out devils, performing healings, and preaching with power. But it appears that they did not have the power and authority to give the Gift of the Holy Ghost until now. John the Baptist summarized Jesus’ mission, to “baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Luke 3:16). Jesus’ gift was the baptism of the Spirit.

There is a distinction between *the power* and *the gift* of the Holy Ghost. As the Gospels now stand, they claim that the Spirit did not work as fully during Jesus’ ministry until here, after the death and resurrection of the Lord. However, the gifts and fruits of the Spirit were present.³² In Joseph Smith’s terms, they received the gift of, or the right to receive, the Holy Ghost. The greatest outpouring of the Spirit’s force did not come until the day of Pentecost: “they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 1:8, 2:4).

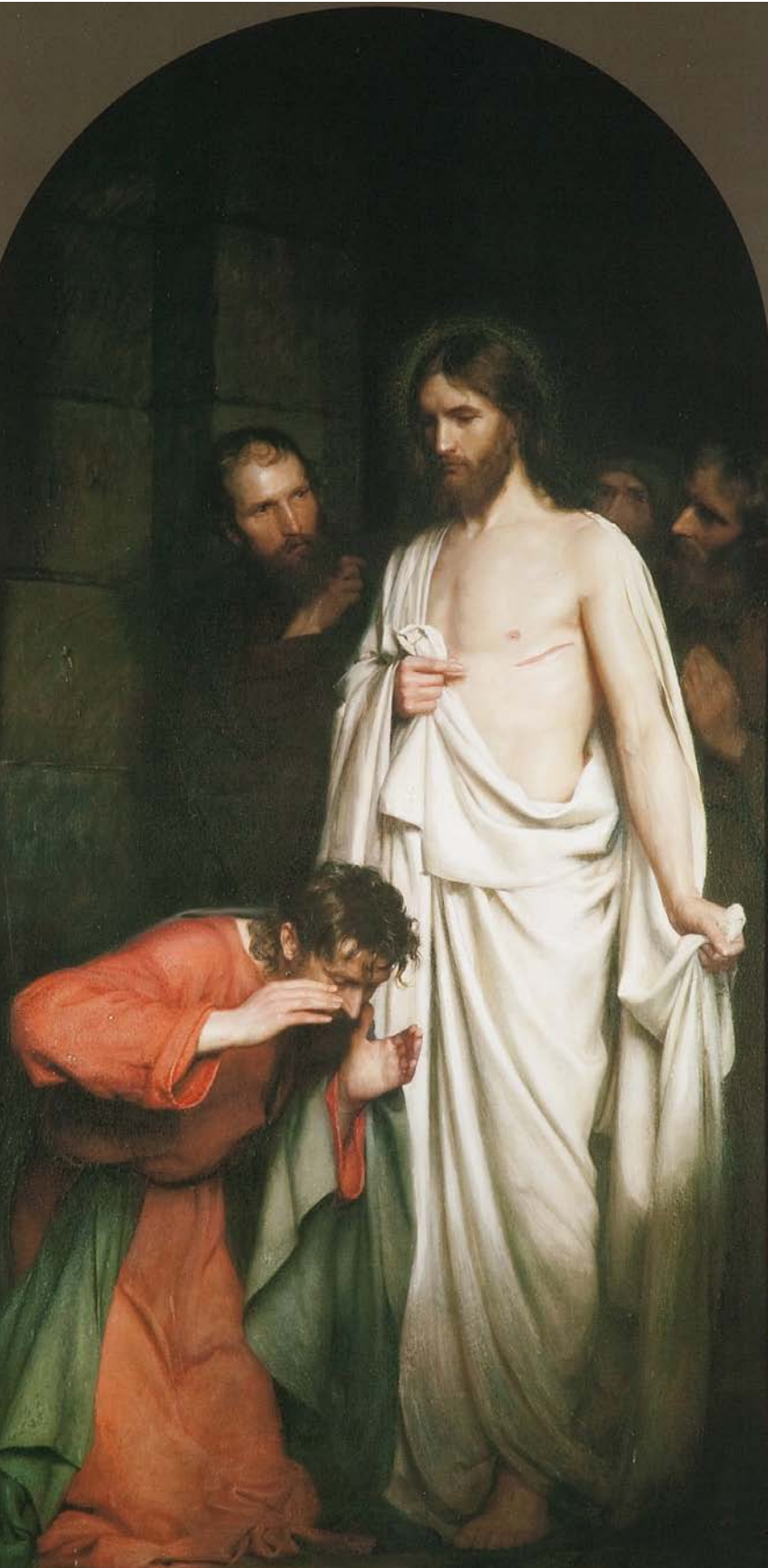
John 20:23 “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (CSB) The Lord gave the apostles the “keys” to yet another divine gift. Elder McConkie explained that the Lord delegates this to his “earthly agents, in which instances they can and will remit the sins of repentant persons. But, in the true sense it would be the Lord forgiving the sins, though He acted through the agency of His servants, the prophets (D&C 132:46–47).”³³

Thomas’ Faith Strengthened with Jesus’ Visitation

John 20:24–25; Mark 16:14

John 20:24–25 “But Thomas . . . was not with them when Jesus came” The Gospel of John singles out poor Thomas as the doubter (even though all the apostles doubted the women’s witness according to Mark and Luke). We also read of Thomas in: Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:8; Luke 6:15; John 11:16; 14:5. Thomas did many things right—even here, the account includes that he stayed with his brethren. He was with them, in the right place at the right time to see the Lord the very next week. Patrick Mason points out that Thomas persevered, he needed help, and he stayed with his brethren and was where he was supposed to be.³⁴ The problem was, *he allowed his fears to arrest his faith*.

John 20:26 “Eight days later, His disciples were once again inside with the doors locked” (BSB) It was again on a Sunday—adding more importance to this day as the new day for worship because of the Lord’s Day of Resurrection and visitation. I think Mark’s account of Jesus’ visitation fits here because it reads “Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven . . . he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen”



(NIV). Both of these facts only fit the second Sabbath visitation.

“Peace be unto you” The Lord also greeted them with the same greeting, which is also a promised blessing, especially for Thomas: “*Shalom*.” He asks us to seek peace through our faith. We disciples can control our minds and hearts enough to feel both peace and cheer. The Spirit’s gift of peace and hope comes as we diligently seek both of these blessings from God.

John 20:27 “Stop doubting and believe” (NIV) Thomas’ doubts were reasonable, but Jesus asks all of His called witnesses to replace their doubts with faith.³⁵ Could this also be a command? This statement from the Lord is like His earlier counsel/command to “be of good cheer,” which He also says at very challenging times (Matthew 9:2; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49). God wants us to take charge of our emotions or feelings as recorded in the Book of Mormon: “the Messiah cometh . . . that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And . . . they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26)

John 20:29 “. . . blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed” I admire the Lord’s reprimand, so filled with love that Thomas had hope for becoming better rather than despairing at his foolishness. Now the Apostles as a group, including Thomas, could act as eye-witnesses of the Resurrected Jesus. Christianity furnished other witnesses who

say (i.e. Acts 10:41) as a foundation of witnesses. But, the emphasis is to believe through faith on their message, not on the messengers. Jesus repeated this same emphasis to the Nephites: “More blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me” (3 Nephi 12:2). Gratefully, the next two times the Lord appeared, Thomas was still there with the church (John 21:2, Acts 1:13).

John Identified his Purpose

John 20:30–31

John 20:30–31 “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded” Jesus gave His apostles unwritten signs, and those who enter His temples receive the same. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the early Christian apostles knew, “all the ordinances, and blessings [that] were in the Church.”³⁶

“these are written that you may believe . . . by believing you may have life in his name” John states his purpose in writing is to bring souls to believe in order to receive Eternal Life. His writings are often referred to as the “Spiritual Gospel” as he speaks of spiritual things. Other scripture also focuses on bearing record of Christ or typifying of Him (Hosea 10:12; Moses 6:63; 2 Nephi 11:4; etc.). John’s purpose goes further. We are not only to believe but grow His witness into belief that grows toward “life in his name” or Exhalation (All four uses of “life/ zoe” by John reference Eternal Life—1:4; 3:36; 6:68).

THE APOSTLES FISHING

John 21:1–8³⁷

John 21:1 “Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias” This section refers to the “forty-day literature” when the resurrected Jesus appeared repeatedly during the first forty-days after His resurrection. The Sea of Tiberias was a different name for the Sea of Galilee. (Tiberias was a big city built by Herod Antipas in AD 18 on the western border of the sea as the capital of Galilee, so the sea took on its name.) In John’s gospel, Galilee was the first place to see Jesus’ glory during His ministry and now it was the last place to have that same honor.

John 21:2 “There were together . . .” Five apostles are mentioned by name, and two unnamed. The five include, Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John. These are the same five that were originally introduced as early disciples in John 1:35–50 (plus two others: Andrew and Philip). I think it is significant that John places Thomas after Peter, directly following his retelling of the time when Thomas doubted Jesus’ resurrection. This is the only time in a list of apostles where we find Thomas listed. The apostles had probably gone to Galilee in response to the Lord’s direction in Matthew 26:32, “after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee;” and Matthew 28:10b, “go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me” (also see Mark 16:7).



Jesus Shows Himself to Peter and Others by William Hole, 1905.

John 21:3 “I go a fishing” The Lord told the apostles at His Last Supper that He would no longer be able to completely protect and provide for them (Luke 22:36). So, it seems natural to me that as they waited for direction from the Lord, they returned to something they used to do professionally. They probably still owned their boat as they had used it during the ministry (“the boat” Matthew 13:2; 15:39; MARK 5:21; John 6:21; etc.). This way they could help provide for their families or perhaps earn money for future missions. Perhaps they went fishing because they did not know exactly where to put their energies next; they were not sure what their new life would entail. I am sure they all missed Jesus, as we all would, after spending three years beside Him every day. Whatever their motivation, when they returned home to Galilee, they took a night off to go fishing.

We see no evidence in the text that their faith or testimonies had wavered. Perhaps they lacked initiative and needed more divine direction. The Lord taught in modern revelation that disciples need to act without being constantly prodded. “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward” (D&C 58:26).

The first apostles’ relationship to Jesus was more of a master and disciple/servant. They were used to taking orders and following as sheep, not brainstorming up their own plans. In fact, they had to be flexible in their thoughts and actions as Jesus often asked them to do very shocking things (healed and gleaned on the Sabbath, spoke to and instructed women, walked through Samaria and ate their food, etc.). They got to a point where they learned to wait and watch to see what Jesus did rather than follow their cultural norms.

“. . . that night they caught nothing” John uses his characteristic irony, that the whole fishing expedition was spent for naught. His references to “night,” should trigger his oft-used symbolism of darkness (this time perhaps including their thoughts or need for direction). Commercial fishing was often done at night because the fish school swam closer to the surface then; also, they could sell the fresh fish in the morning. Not this time, though.

John 21:4–6 “**Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not . . .**” The fishermen did not recognize Jesus, probably due to the dim dawn light, the distance, or because He was unexpected. The person on the shore shouted out directions to put the net down again but on the right side of their boat this time. He called them “boys/*paidon*” or “lads” (AB). They took the advice and tried one more time. A miracle occurred; the net is filled.

John 21:7 “**it is the Lord**” coincides with the “*I am*” formula.³⁸ Either John’s younger eyes, or his sensitive heart, recognized the source of the miracle as Jesus. John immediately communicated this to his fishing partner and best friend, Peter. Fisherman usual wore only a bottom layer of clothing (either a fisherman’s smock or loin cloth). Out of reverence for the Lord, he grabbed his outer clothing or cloak and tied it around himself. (The Greek word is the same as when Jesus tied a towel around himself to wash the apostles’ feet as recorded in John 13:4-5). Then Peter literally “*threw himself*” into the sea and swam to shore.

John 21:8 “**And the other disciples came . . . dragging the net with fishes**” John assures the readers that they did not abandon Jesus’ gift, but rowed the little boat the last 100 yards (a cubit is about 18,” from elbow to fingertip) back to the shore. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He promised to make his disciples, “*fishers of men*” (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). Now with His help, the disciples caught every type of fish in their net, symbolic of their future proselytizing work. Their commission was to gather and draw people to Jesus.³⁹

Jesus Instructs Them in Fishing by Love

John 21:9–14

John 21:9–10 “**As they were come . . . they saw a fire . . . and fish . . . and bread**” Jesus provided a fire to warm them and food for their breakfast (and it appears that He even acted as chef). We see the roles reversed again, as Jesus served His apostles. In our lives, He will also provide for our needs if we will follow His direction.

John 21:11 “**It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn**” (NIV) The number of “*great fishes*” is significant here. According to Jerome, the number 153 was the exact number of species of fish that the Greek zoologists had enumerated at that point in time.⁴⁰ Symbolically, as this story will lead to a call for greater missionary work, the 153 fish can imply that the Gospel net would extend to all species or kindreds, tongues, and people.

More important than the exact number is the inclusion that the net did not break. The net points to the apostles’ role as fishers among humanity. Their capacity as fishers of men will also extend to all who are drawn into the net of the Lord’s gospel. Earlier when the Lord had directed Peter (and possibly his partners James and John) to let down their nets for a great catch, the net broke (Luke 5:6). Now, the net was strong enough for the job and the apostles could handle the work before them. Jesus instructed the fishers to take care of the catch He has provided, “Bring of the fish which you have now caught,” and Peter went back to help drag the net ashore.

John 21:12–14 “Come and dine” is an invitation to all who hear the Lord’s call. This is the third post-resurrection visit to the apostles in the Gospel of John (John 20:19, 26). It is also the third or fourth meal that Jesus provided for the disciples. It has other similarities to John 6, in which He feeds the multitude bread and fishes as well. He asks all disciples to join in a sacrament meal to remember His sacrifice.

John 21:15 when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son of Jonas*” In John 1:42, Jesus gave Simon a nick-name or new name, “Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.” From then on, Jesus always included “Cephas/Peter/stone” when referring to him in the Gospel of John. Here Jesus did not call him by the ennobling or familiar name, “rock.” Was it intentional? Perhaps because the author had just introduced him as “Simon Peter,” it was too redundant, and shortened it. But that is not the author’s pattern earlier. We find thirty-two times where Jesus referred to Peter in the Gospel of John, and he never dropped “Peter,” except here. In addition, the verbal tense is less familiar “and thus challenging his friendship.”⁴¹

“Lovest thou me more than these?” The Lord’s reference to “these,” I presume includes the nets, boats, fishes, or more generally, His occupation and mortal desires. His choice of “love” is more nuanced in Greek than in English. Throughout the Gospel of John, the author(s) carefully and consistently chose two words for “love,” *agape* and *phileo* (even though in Greek there are at least five words meaning love).⁴² In English one cannot tell, but this conversation includes both *agape* and *phileo*:

The Good Shepherd, mosaic in Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, 1st half of 5th century.
Image via Wikimedia Commons.



21:15 Jesus said: “*agapao me*/lovest thou me?” . . . Peter answered: “*philo se*/I love thee”

21:16 Jesus said: “*agapao me*/lovest thou me?” . . . Peter answered: “*philo se*/I love thee”

21:17 Jesus said: “*phileis me*/lovest thou me?” . . . Peter answered: “*philo se*/I love thee”

Did the author mean to communicate this subtle, but meaningful difference? After studying each use of love by John and the rest of the New Testament, I think the answer is yes, and so do other Greek scholars.⁴³ Perhaps Peter did not initially understand the Lord’s “love,” but the author communicated a difference. Even in his second language, the author was consistent.

A list of all references to “love” in the Gospel of John shows that “*philo*” is used one-fourth of the time, and always out of the mouth of someone else other than Jesus (with the one exception of this verse here John 21:17).⁴⁴ We find that Jesus consistently uses the Greek word for love—it is always *agape*—both as a verb, *agapao*, and as a noun, *agape*. Everywhere that is, except here. Some have argued that the two words meant the same thing but were used for variety. Yet, throughout all of the rest of the Johannine literature, whenever “love” is used together three and four times, the author does not feel the need to change the Greek word, but always uses, *agape*.

John 21:16–17 “Feed my lambs . . . Shepherd My sheep . . . Feed my sheep” (BSB) The second request is also literally “tend my sheep.” By repeating His request three times, is Jesus giving Peter a gentle chastisement? President David O. McKay suggested that in this threefold questioning of Peter, the Lord let him make good his error. “It purged his soul with reaffirmation of loyalty and energetic action.”⁴⁵ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland suggested the Lord corrected Peter’s priorities and put him back into the saddle.

“Then Peter, why are you here? Why are we back on this same shore, by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn’t it obvious then and isn’t it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples—and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith. I need someone who loves me, truly, truly loves me and loves what our Father in Heaven has commissioned me to do.”⁴⁶

Whatever the motivation, Peter internalized these specific words of council as we read in his later writings to other young leaders, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; . . . neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2–3).

Jesus Prophecies of Peter’s and John’s Future

John 21:18–19

John 21:18–19 “when thou art old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee” This is looked at as Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s death. Eventually, Peter did lay down his life for God’s sheep as a martyr

in Rome under Nero. According to the early Christian, Origen (AD 184–253): “Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downwards, as he himself had desired to suffer.”⁴⁷ The tradition says he did not feel himself worthy to die as the Lord had done, so he hung upside down.

John 21:21–23 “went this saying abroad . . . that disciple should not die” John did not have to die because the Lord answered his wish to continue to serve the Lord in this world until the Lord’s Second Coming. We have a second and third witness of this in 3 Nephi 28 and D&C 7. John the Beloved and the three Nephites, received some sort of change to their body so that they are now translated beings. The Lord promised all four that in a twinkling they will be resurrected (3 Nephi 28:6–8, 36–40). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that “translated bodies are designed for future missions.”⁴⁸

John’s Final Testimony

John 21:24 “this is the disciple testified of these things” The author finally identifies himself as the disciple who leaned on Jesus’ breast at the Last Supper. He identified himself earlier only as “the beloved disciple,” or one of the disciples.

John 21:25 “Many other things . . . if they should be written . . . the world itself could not contain the books” John closes with the need for more scripture (just like Mormon and Moroni)! Through the Urim & Thummim, Joseph received D&C 7, from John’s parchment. Also, we are told in D&C 93:6 that more of John’s record is coming.

Jesus’ Post-Resurrection Appearance in Galilee

Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:15–18

Matthew 28:16 “the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain . . .” The designated meeting place was a mountain, perfectly in keeping with the usual Temple parallel, a high place for a holy meeting. Much of the forty-day ministry literature includes prayer circles and similar parallels to modern temple ritual.⁴⁹ We also see remnants in the New Testament Epistles: “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11); “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10); “Honour unto the wife . . . and as being heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7).

Matthew 28:17 “. . . they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted” Was the doubting account harkening back to when they doubted the women’s witness and to Thomas, or did it relate to doubts at Jesus’ appearance? We have scriptural examples of others doubting an angel’s witness, such as Zacharias in the temple, and Laman and Lemuel in the Book of Mormon. Perhaps some apostles fell into that category.

Matthew 28:18 “all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” Jesus’ atonement sacrifice qualified Him to

receive even more power over this earth and the redemption of the children of God. Jesus shared, or promised some of that power as He sent forth the apostles with keys to baptize and “all things” (Matthew 28:20).

Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15 “Go . . . and teach all nations” This was a vastly different mission call and focus than Jesus’ three-year mission, where the teaching, healing, and miracles witnessed of His Messiahship to the Jews. Jesus looked forward to the time when the disciples would preach His gospel to all the “nations” or gentiles. They would not realize this until after Peter’s vision in Joppa, but Jesus was opening the door, here. The early Christians were expecting the end and had been instructed by Jesus to watch until the end.

Mark 16:16–18 “And these signs shall follow them that believe . . .” Mark’s account includes more examples of Jesus’ power shared with all of His disciples in the form of the gifts of the Spirit: casting out devils, speaking in tongues, healing, and protections from poisons and serpents. The requirement for these gifts or “signs” is belief.

Matthew 28:20 “Observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always”

In the birth narratives in Matthew Jesus is introduced as Emmanuel or “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Now at the end of that Gospel, Matthew restates this as He departs after His resurrection: “I am with you always” Each of the five sections of Matthew ends with the concluding phrase “When Jesus had ended his saying . . .” (Matthew 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1). But here, if His disciples will obey, Jesus promises a continuation of revelation.

Header Image: Image by TC Perch from Pixabay.

Right: Ascension by John Singleton Copley, 1775. Image via Wikimedia Commons.



ENDNOTES

1. The Old English roots of the word “gospel” are derived from “good/god” and “news, a story/pel.” It refers to Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection.
2. Matthew 28:10; Mark 15:40–41; 16:7; Luke 8:2; John 20:3–18; 1 Corinthians 11:5,11;14:12; for more see footnote 14
3. For example, when churches were first established by Alma’s the Elder, he instructed them to focus solely on Jesus’ redemption and how to receive it: “they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people” (Mosiah 18:20).
4. Paul Gaechter, *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew* Trans., Lore Schulteis, published in English by John W. Welch, ed. (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2013). <https://chiasmusresources.org/literary-art-gospel-matthew> (accessed 6-7-19).
5. James McClinton, *Quid Pro Quirk: A Layman’S Guide to Resolving Alleged Bible Quirks* (Bloomington, ID: WestBow press -Zondervan, 2014), 167. I found this same quote word for word in several places, but never with a footnote. I was not able to find the original source.
6. John H. Elliott, *Anchor Bible: 1 Peter* (New York City, NY: Random House-Doubleday, 1964), 568. “As roles and status were gender-specific and clearly demarcated, so was the social space that was proper to males (public) and females (domestic, private).” Then he quoted Xenophon (c.430–353 BC), an Athenian soldier: “God from the first adapted the woman’s nature, I think, to the indoor, and man to the outdoor tasks and cares. For he made the man’s body and mind more capable of enduring cold and heat, and journeys and campaigns; and therefore, imposed on him the outdoor tasks. To the woman, God assigned the indoor tasks”
7. *Mishnah, Moed: Shabbath*, 7:4; 8:3, 8.5, 10.5, 6. The oral laws functioned as a buffer zone around the Torah to avoid any chance of breaking one of the laws of Moses. For example, from the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy came thirty-nine definitions of work, which then developed into hundreds of oral laws detailing forbidden work on the Sabbath.
8. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6. 9,3. Jerusalem that usually houses between 20,000 to 30,000 people, explodes during the time of the annual pilgrimage feasts. Josephus claimed, 2,700,200 Jews one year who came to worship. Scholars assume his numbers are exaggerated by a large degree. But even if we cut the number in half, or even take off one zero, the city would be bursting at the seams.
9. W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible Series–Matthew* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).
10. *Mishnah Ketuboth*, 4.4; quoting Rabbi Judah (born AD 135 and codified the *Mishnah*). The *Mishnah* recorded the prescribed precedent for husbands who lost a wife: “Even the poorest Israelite should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman.” A hired “wailing woman” cried and shrieked to dramatize sorrow. The hired mourner dressed in sackcloth, wept overtly, howled for hours, and threw dirt on her head. The mourning was at its height on the third day according to Rabbi Bar Kappara about AD 200 (Raymond E. Brown, *Anchor Bible: John XIII-XXII* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 982. Also see 1 Maccabees 2:14, 3:47.
11. Kent Brown, *BYU New Testament Commentary: The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015). The angels refer

to Jesus with a new title and name (by using the accusative singular article). Note how Luke includes an array of meaningful names for Jesus in this chapter.

12. GOD'S WORD® Translation
13. *Mishnah, Avoth* 1:5. Talk not much with womankind . . . they said this of a man's own wife: how much more of his fellow's wife!" Also, "Do not speak excessively with a woman lest this ultimately lead[s] you to adultery!" And, "He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself, neglects the study of The Law and at the last will inherit Gehenna [hell]."
14. Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA. GP, 2015), chs 2–4.
15. Raymond Brown, *Anchor Bible: John XII-XXII*, 984.
16. Josephus, *Against Apion*, II. 25. "A woman is inferior to her husband in all things." Also, from Josephus, *Antiquities*, IV.8:15; "Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex . . ." along with a list of others. Josephus felt that Adam was cursed in the Garden of Eden: "Because he weakly submitted to the counsel of his wife." *Antiquities of the Jews*, I.1.4 A beloved Jewish writer, Ben Sira, from the century the New Testament write many statements like: "Better is the iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn, and a woman bringing shame and reproach" (*Ecclesiasticus*, 42:140). Women were to receive counsel and not give it. "Give not to son or wife, brother or friend, power over thee while thou livest; . . . In all thy works keep the pre-eminence" (*Ibid.*, 33:20, 23).
17. *Mishnah, Shebuoth*, 4:1; claims that women should not be trusted because Sarah lied (Genesis 18:5). The *Mishnah, Shebuoth*, 4:1, includes a list of unacceptable witnesses in Judaic courts of law including ten classes of people: women, slaves, minors, lunatics, deaf, blind, wicked, contemptible, relatives and interested parties. Shepherds fell among the wicked as they grazed their flocks on other's lands.
18. Paul Gaechter, *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew*. <https://chiasmusresources.org/literary-art-gospel-matthew> (accessed 6-7-19). The two fronts are 1) women are allowed to touch Jesus and 2) when the women talk to the eleven apostles in the other gospels, there is no mention of seeing Jesus before Mary Magdalene. Paul Gaechter argues that Matthew 28:9–10 is a latter addition to the original text because of the interruption to the chiasmus and lack of logic: "It can be made plain that this little periscope was not part of the original version of the Gospel of Matthew. The content is a vague generalization of Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene as reported by John (John 20:11–18)."
19. Kent Jackson, Robert Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures: The Gospels* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 5. 454.
20. Peter's personality is similar in Luke's writings of the Book of Acts of the Apostles. He becomes the main character in the first half of Acts. Luke includes Peter doing the same miracles in Acts, that Jesus did in His ministry. It demonstrates parallel accounts to teach that the same miracles/authority/teachings/church were passed down from Jesus to Peter, and then repeated for Paul.
21. The Gardener is a powerful image of the Lord. As He works with His disciples to help them grow and bring forth fruit, as He prepares the soil, pulls out weeds, and prunes our lives, He is a master gardener. Sometimes we wish God were a Superman, but more often than not, He is a Gardener.
22. Early on a spring morning in Fayette New York. After Mary Whitmer milked the cow, and left the barn, she was met by Angel Moroni who showed her the plates. See <https://bookofmormoncentral.org/blog/5-women-who-are-witnesses-of>

- the-physical-golden-plates (accessed 6/7/19).
23. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 369.
 24. The title is not found in the Old Testament, but a form of the extended title was used outside of the New Testament in the first center for the great master ruler and teacher, Gamaliel. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12494-rabbi> (accessed 6/8/19).
 25. <https://biblehub.com/kjv/john/20-17.htm> (accessed 6-8-19). Another interpretation is that Mary fulfills a type and shadow give from the Mosaic temple ritual. “Jesus speaks to Mary as the High Priest fulfilling the day of atonement (Leviticus 16). Having accomplished the sacrifice, He was on His way to present the sacred blood in heaven, and that, between the meeting with Mary in the garden and the meeting of Matthew 28:9. He had so ascended and returned: a view in harmony with types.”
 26. Brown, *Anchor: John XIII-XXI*, 1117.
 27. Names in the New Testament are often with different spellings and even languages. At a time when three languages were often know by common people, and spelling was not standardized, there is often variation in names (i.e. see James and Joses interchanged in Matthew and Mark).
 28. This is especially plausible if Mary the wife of Clepas were one of the women preparing and serving the meal.
 29. Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Learning the Language of the Lord: A Guidebook to Personal Revelation* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2018), chapter 1. The Lord gave Joseph Smith guidelines on how to identify the Spirit—starting with D&C 5:16; 6:14–15; 22–23; 8:1; and 9:7–9—well before most other teachings.
 30. We learn that Jesus appeared to the Nephites just under a year after the great destruction at His death by comparing 3 Nephi 8:5 with 11:18.
 31. Definition given by Dr. John Perry, Cardinal Stritch University class, 2003.
 32. Fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). Paul’s list of the gifts of the Spirit include, wisdom, knowledge, faith. Healing, miraculous powers, to another prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues” (I Corinthians 12:8–10). Perhaps the lack of the Spirit is emphasized because the final editors of the New Testament had a trinity view?
 33. *Mormon Doctrine*, 294.
 34. Patrick Mason, *Planted* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 2015).
 35. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, *General Conference*, “Come Join with Us,” October 2013.
 36. Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990),10; also 9, 42, 110, 210, 327–331.
 37. John 21:1–16 shares about 10 similarities with the apostles fishing in Luke 5:1–11, but the timing is completely different).
 38. Brown, *Anchor Bible: John XIII-XXI*, 1072.
 39. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, 1988), 102.
 40. Brown, *Anchor Bible: John XIII-XXI*, 1074. Some suggest the number points to the fullness of church’s perfection. They

derive this from 17 cubed. Seventeen is made from combining two symbolic numbers: seven representing complete, whole, or perfect, with ten, the number for the Decalogue (7+10=17). I think this is a stretch.

41. Ibid., 1102.
42. Most common Greek words for love: 1. n. *agape* / v. *agapao*: of persons: to welcome, to entertain, to be fond of, to love dearly; of things: to be well pleased, to be contented at or with a thing; 2. *phileo*: to love; to approve of; to like; sanction; to treat affectionately or kindly, to welcome, befriend, brotherly love; 3. *stergo*: form of romantic love; 4. *aspazomai*: form of romantic love; 5. *eros*: form of romantic love (root for erotic).
43. Richard C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel 11–21* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 2008, reprint), 1419. The verb “*agapan*” is the love of intelligence, reason and comprehension, coupled with the corresponding purpose; in this its content it vastly outranks the other type of love. . . . Jesus never asked us to love our enemies in the sense of “*philein*”; he never himself loved his enemies in this way. But “*agapan*”—yes, with this love, did God love the world, and we can love our enemies, comprehending all that is wrong, sanctifying the world, converting our enemies. Compare John 3:16 and every other passage in which either of the verbs is used in this Gospel. Only in a few cases, where either type of love would apply, either verb might be used; but even then the great distinction would remain—the two are never equal. . . . The wrong kind of emphasis is placed on “*the third time*” by those who fail to see the force of the third question because they confuse “*agapan*” and “*philein*”. What went to Peter’s heart was this verb “*philein*” in the final question, “Hast thou affection for me?” When Jesus twice asked about the higher love, once as to its degree compared with others and then about its very presence, Peter with all due humility ventured to assert only the lower form of love. But now in this third question Jesus probed even for this lower love
44. LOVE=AGAPE
 - John 3:35 “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”
 - John 11:5 “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister . . .”
 - John 12:43 “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”
 - John 13:1 “. . . having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”
 - John 13:23 “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.”
 - John 19:26 “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith . . .”
 - John 21:7 “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. . . .”
 - John 21:20 “. . . the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper”
 - 1 John 2:10 “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light”
 - 1 John 2:15 “Love not the world, neither the things . . . in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”
 - 1 John 3:10 “Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”
 - 1 John 3:11 “. . . we should love one another.”
 - 1 John 3:14 “. . . we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”
 - 1 John 3:18 “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”
 - 1 John 3:23 “love one another, as he gave us commandment.”

1 John 4:7 “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God . . .”

1 John 4:8 “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

1 John 4:10 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son . . .”

1 John 4:11 “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

1 John 4:12 “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

1 John 4:19 “We love him, because he first loved us.”

1 John 4:20 “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother . . . how can he love God?”

1 John 4:21 “. . . he who loveth God love his brother also.”

1 John 5:1 “Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

1 John 5:2 “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”

2 John 1:1 “THE elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth”

2 John 1:5 “. . . that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

3 John 1:1 “unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.”

Revelation 1:5 “. . . Unto him that loved us, and washed us . . .”

Revelation 12:11 “. . . they loved not their live”

Revelation 20:9 “. . . the saints about, and the beloved city.”

LOVE=PHILEO

John 11:3 “Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.”

John 11:36 “Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!”

John 20:2 “. . . the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.”

John 21:15 “. . . son of Jonas, *agapao* thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

John 21:16 “. . . *agapao* thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

John 21:17 “. . . lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

Revelation 22:15 “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, . . . whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

45. Jackson and Millet, eds., *Gospels*, 466.

46. Jeffrey R. Holland, *General Conference*, October 2012 The quote from, “The First Great Commandment” continues: “Ours is not a feeble message. It is not a fleeting task. It is not hapless; it is not hopeless; it is not to be consigned to the ash heap of history. It is the work of Almighty God, and it is to change the world. So, Peter, for the second and presumably the last time, I am asking you to leave all this and to go teach and testify, labor and serve loyally until the day in which they will do to you exactly what they did to me.”

47. Origen, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis III*, quoted by Eusebius his *Ecclesiastical History* (III, 1).

48. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1844; Reprint Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1980), 4:425. Transfiguration is different than the change made to become a transfigured being.
49. Hugh Nibley, "The Early Christian Prayer Circle," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1978): 4–78. David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 573. Hugh Nibley with Don E. Norton, ed., *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City, UT: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1992), 313.