



*Annibale Carracci, Holy Women at Christ's Tomb, 1590s, oil on canvas, 121 x 146 cm, Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg. Image via Wikimedia Commons.*

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

JESUS'S RESURRECTION: SORROW REPLACED BY JOY

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## **Introduction**

For three days and three nights the body of Jesus lay in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, but His Spirit continued God's work. The Apostle Peter later explained, "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison. . . . For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead" (1 Pe 3:19; 4:6). After pondering on these words in 1918, President Joseph F. Smith wrote, "As I wondered, my eyes were opened, and my understanding quickened, and I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the wicked. . . . He organized His forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority and commissioned them to go forth."<sup>1</sup>

Our New Testament accounts continue on the first day of the week, when the Lord returned to Jerusalem in His resurrected body. Each of the four Gospels' last chapters focus on Jesus's Resurrection and commission to His disciples to spread the news of triumph over death. This "good news" (the original root words for *gospel*) is the greatest news ever given on earth.<sup>2</sup>

The Gospels unitedly proclaim that the first witnesses of this truth were women. (This is one of many parallels between the birth and death narratives in Matthew and Luke.)<sup>3</sup> Jesus's empowering call to the women set a standard of change in Christianity whereby both women and men were called to mutually serve by testifying, preaching, and prophesying, thereby building Jesus's Church on earth.<sup>4</sup> The message of Jesus's redemption and Resurrection is also the central theme of Christ's restored Church and modern scripture.<sup>5</sup>

## The Empty Tomb

*Women are first witnesses of Jesus's empty tomb—Mt 26:1–10; Mk 16:1–11; Lk 24:1–12; Jn 20:1–18*

**Mk 16:1–2 (Mt 28:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1).** "*when the Sabbath was past . . . very early in the morning of the first day of the week.*" All four Gospels state that the Resurrection took place on Sunday. From this point on, Sunday was the Christian Sabbath because the Resurrection became the central day in the history of the world. Most Christians still reverence the first day of the week, Sunday, as the Sabbath for this reason.

**Jn 20:1.** "*it was yet dark.*" John recorded that it was still night when the women arrived at the Lord's tomb. They may have enjoyed a nearly full moon since it was only two days after Passover (which always occurs the night of a full moon). The darkness, a symbol John often uses, could be figurative too since the women were filled with darkness and confusion within as well as without. Matthew and Mark recorded the women arriving at the tomb shortly before dawn. These minor variances are normal for oral history, especially when it comes from those who were not eyewitnesses.

**Mt 28:1 (Mk 16:1; Jn 20:1).** "*Mary Magdalene.*" John initially mentioned only one woman at the tomb, Mary Magdalene, but in the next sentence he used the plural "we," referring to other women present (Jn 20:2). The author wanted to give special attention to Mary Magdalene's experience. (Mary's second name suggests she was from the wealthy city of Magdala, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee about seven miles southwest of Jesus's mission headquarters in Capernaum). At the time, it would have been very dangerous for a woman to go outside the city wall in the dark alone. Matthew adds another Mary as her companion. Mark adds Salome to their party. Luke mentions all the women who were present at the cross plus even more. For a chart of all the women at the cross and tomb, see my comments on Mt 27:56.

**Lk 24:1.** "*[The women] came unto the sepulchre.*" Burial traditions in the Judeo world at this time have been thoroughly studied. Funeral rites and burials were traditionally a women's duty: "The body of the dead was given anointing, washing, adorning, wrapping, and vigil by the women of the household.

. . . Women were at the center of rites of passage such as birth, marriage, and death.”<sup>6</sup> Women were allowed to prepare and wrap both female and male corpses.

**Lk 24:1. “bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.”**

The Old Testament attests that expensive burial spices were used to honor dead kings (2 Chr 16:14; Jer 34:5). In the case of the women anointing Jesus’s body, the Sabbath oral laws prohibited them from finishing their work.<sup>7</sup> One of the Sabbath laws forbade anointing a deceased body, yet preparing anointments and spices to use after the Sabbath was allowed.<sup>8</sup> Because the women obeyed the cultural Sabbath restrictions (Lk 23:56), we assume they also would have obeyed the societal dress code. In the Pharisaic culture, women were discouraged from going out in public.<sup>9</sup> But if they did venture out, they were to completely cover themselves, including their faces. (Even though artwork does not portray this, historical Jewish records explain that in public, a Jewish woman should be draped so that she was completely covered from her head down to her ankles.)<sup>10</sup>

These devoted Galilean women could not be kept from the tomb.<sup>11</sup> So while it was still dark, this small group of shrouded women crept down the narrow passageways and retraced their steps to the garden where they had seen the servants of Joseph of Arimathea lay Jesus’s body (Lk 23:55–56). Slowly and quietly they went, because they carried the heavy load of ointments and did not want to disturb those sleeping in corners, alleyways, and public squares and on rooftops (nearly every available space in Jerusalem would have been filled with visiting pilgrims for the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread).<sup>12</sup> They ventured outside the city wall, guided by their memories of that fateful day, to the main road where the Roman soldiers had dragged Jesus—bruised and bleeding from Pilate’s scourging—only three days previously. They had to walk past Golgotha, with all its horrific memories and smells, before they entered the garden again (Jn 19:41).

**Mk 16:3. “And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”** Each author describes the women’s experience differently. Mark shows that they talked to each other as they walked and worried about the obstacles that could inhibit them from performing their duty.

**Mt 28:2 (BSB). “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 it. The account describes the dramatic arrival of an angel whose shining appearance scared the guards so much that they fainted or “became as dead men,” or as the Anchor Bible translates it, were “paralyzed with fright.”<sup>13</sup>

God used earthquakes to speak to humans many times in scripture (for example, with Alma the Younger and Saul). 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 angels in scripture are described as looking like a shiny and dazzling human wearing bright white clothes.

**Mt 28:5 (NIV; also Mk 16:6; Lk 24:5). “Do not be afraid.”** In scripture, angels often begin by telling their audience not to be frightened (see, for example, Luke’s angelic visitations in the birth narratives,



Lk 1–2). Luke describes the women as being “terrified and bowing their faces to the ground.” But the angel assured them, “I know that you are looking for Jesus,” and then invited them to come and see the empty tomb. These devoted Galilean women, who had been ministering to Jesus throughout His ministry, were now the first disciples to hear the good news (Lk 8:2).

Luke’s Gospel includes a description of “two men . . . in shining garments.” Two is a significant number because it meant the men acted as a double witness, fulfilling the requirement from the law of Moses (Deu 17:6; 19:15). The JST changed each account to include plural angels and also changed Luke’s shiny dressed men to angels, which gives 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 has 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 (Mt 28:4) and the frightened women who walked into the tomb (Lk 24:3). This sepulchre 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 was a place to prepare the body and to mourn; the second was where the body lay for a period before the bones were gathered and placed together with older family bones. Mourning was an integral part of Jewish ritual.<sup>14</sup>

**Lk 24:5. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?”** Eric Huntsman’s translation emphasizes a new title for the Lord: “the Living.”<sup>15</sup> The Aramaic Bible also emphasizes this announcement using another new title for Jesus: “Why are you seeking The Life among the dead?” This was Eve’s name in Hebrew too. 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” (Jn 11:25–26 GWT). Jesus began His role as the source of life as the Creator of the world. Now because of the Resurrection, He had become the source of immortal life (Mose 1:39).

**Mt 28:7 (BSB; also Mk 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. The Lord deliberately and repeatedly called His female disciples to act as the first voice for this message. The women saw angels and the Lord Himself, who commissioned them to carry this message to the Apostles gathered in Jerusalem. This call for women to witness was a revolutionary difference from the Jewish culture of the day. Normally, women were not allowed to speak as a witness in legal settings except in a few rare exceptions. In fact, it was preferred that they did not speak to men at all.<sup>16</sup> Christ, the Apostles, and these angels raised the role of women to testify by bearing their witness and to take an active role in building God’s kingdom on earth.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the Gospels, we find repeated examples of Jesus honoring women and raising their social status. We find this pattern across the New Testament, starting with the birth narratives when Mary, Elizabeth, and the prophetess Anna became witnesses (Lk 1:11, 27–38; 2:36–38).

*Women go tell the disciples—Mt 28:8; Mk 16:8; Lk 24:9; Jn 20:2*

**Jn 20:2. “she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple . . . we know not.”** At that early hour, Mary Magdalene probably woke Peter and the other disciples, but she used the plural “we,” suggesting others were with her. Mary Magdalene was certainly the main character in John’s Resurrection account. For her, the open and empty tomb meant that the body had been stolen. Grave robberies were common enough at the time that an imperial edict had been made to address the problem.<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene’s story piqued Peter’s curiosity enough that he and John (“the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”) bolted to see for themselves. The Synoptic account includes the women going to find the Apostles together.

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

What would it have felt like for the Apostles to receive this news from women? With the earliness of the hour, the women may have awoken the Apostles. Surprisingly, the women’s excitement was met with skepticism. The Lord’s choice of witnesses required the brethren to put aside cultural ideas about gender superiority, learn new skills, and humble themselves to hear God’s witnesses.<sup>19</sup> They honestly record 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” (Mk 16:8). Luke is probably more accurate, as he painfully recorded that when the women told the eleven Apostles, “their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not” (Lk 24:11). Yet the Gospel of Luke goes on to say that the women’s story piqued Peter’s curiosity and that he ran to see for himself, and John’s Gospel adds John himself running beside Peter.

*Table 1. Resurrected Lord’s appearances on Easter Sunday to disciples*

<b>Mt 28:9–10</b>	<b>Mk 16:9–14</b>	<b>Lk 24:13–48</b>	<b>Jn 20:11–23</b>
	Mary Magdalene		Mary Magdalene
Women from tomb	Two as they walked	Two going to Emmaus (Cleopas and disciple)	
		Simon Peter	
	Eleven at supper (probably happened the next Sunday, not on Easter)	Room full of disciples in Jerusalem, ate fish and honeycomb	Room of disciples in Jerusalem at evening, breathed the Spirit

### *Jesus appears to women—Mt 28:9–10*

**Mt 28:9–10. “Jesus met them. . . . Be not afraid: go tell my brethren . . . go into Galilee.”**

These two verses explain 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.

1. They interrupt Matthew’s chiastic outline (mentioned in Mt 27:62–28:15).
2. They contradict Mark’s and John’s claims that Mary Magdalene was the first witness.<sup>20</sup>
3. They contradict Jn 21:11–17, in which Jesus did not allow the first witness to touch Him.
4. Mark, Luke, and John say that the disciples were informed and Peter found the tomb empty before the Lord made His first appearance.

Taking these points into consideration, it appears that at best these two verses were adjusted or added by a later editor trying to harmonize the angel’s message to go to Galilee (Mk 16:7).

### *The guards’ report—Mt 28:11–15*

**Mt 28:11–13 (ESV). “the guard . . . told the chief priests . . . they gave a sufficient sum of money . . . tell people . . . disciples . . . stole him away.”** This is the last leg of Matthew’s chiasmus centered on the guards (see Mt 27:62). The Pharisees’ attempt to guard the tomb turned into a fiasco. The chief priests covered it up with money, which broke the Roman law requiring that guards who dozed or lost the object they were to protect be killed.<sup>21</sup> Matthew mentioned that the chief priests’ false story was still believed when he wrote many years after the fact, which became an obstacle to early missionaries.<sup>22</sup>

### *Peter and John run to the empty tomb—Lk 24:12; Jn 20:3–10*

**Jn 20:3–4 (Lk 24:12). “Peter . . . and that other disciple . . . ran both together.”** Despite all Peter had to regret during the last three days, he now acts in his typical spontaneity, jumping up and running to see.<sup>23</sup>

**Jn 20:4. “the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first.”** The author must have been smiling when he added himself as the faster runner. (Especially as this is the only account that includes the other Apostle; Lk 24:12 has only Peter running to the tomb). While John waited and caught his breath at the entrance of the tomb, enthusiastic Peter kept running right inside. How did the two know where to go? Did John follow the group with Joseph of Arimathea at Jesus’s burial?

**Lk 24:12 (Jn 20:5–7). “stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering.”** By stooping down, the two men would have been able to see 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 Apostles’ hearts likely softened, and they began to believe the women’s witnesses. In the economy of heaven, the Spirit testifies of other’s witnesses (D&C 46:13–14).

Seeing the linen clothing was evidence that the body had not been stolen. (A robber would have taken the wrapped body and not spent the time to unwrap a naked, oozing corpse). John mentions that the linen clothes were wrapped together, with the head bandage or handkerchief lying separately. The scene describes a place of order and teaches that the resurrected Jesus no longer needed His mortal clothing. Jesus next appears in heavenly robes of righteousness.

***Jn 20:9. “yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise.”*** Seeing the clothing was enough to warrant John’s belief that Jesus had risen. Yet John points out that the disciples did not understand the scriptures that spoke of the Resurrection. In the Old Testament, in addition to the sign of Jonah, which the Lord cited repeatedly, we find two other scriptural promises of this event: Hos 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”) and Ps 16:10 (“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”).

***Jn 20:10. “went away again unto their own home.”*** What did “own home” mean? Did the Galilean Apostles have relatives in the area? Could they have stayed in the room from Jesus’s Last Supper or another place that became their home later? More likely is that they went to John Mark’s mother’s home (another Mary), as this home became a Christian meeting place later in Act 12:12.

*Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene—Mk 16:9; Jn 20:11–17*

***Jn 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 lost a loved one can understand, she could not bring herself to leave Jesus’s tomb. She had stayed at the cross, she had stayed for the burial, and now she stayed by the empty tomb.<sup>24</sup> For her it was 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 sepulchre.”

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

In Moses’s tabernacle, the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies was the gold box known as the ark of the testament or covenant. The gold lid that covered it represented the throne of God (Ex 25:17–22). This “mercy seat” had two angels carved on either end facing each other. The throne was a place of mercy because of Jehovah’s atoning gift of redemption. The most merciful gift in eternity is His Resurrection. The mercy seat foreshadowed this scene of the empty tomb with the two angels on either end.

***Jn 20:13. “Woman, why weepst thou?”*** In Mary’s state of sorrow, she did not understand that the angels’ brief dialogue could have continued and relieved her devastation. Instead, she turned from the angels in confusion. This happens to all of us who do not recognize the angels that the Lord sends to help us.

**Jn 20:14 (BSB).** “*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, Mary likely did not see clearly. She would later realize that this was the first of four Resurrection appearances of Jesus that John recorded in his Gospel. It was also the beginning of Jesus’s forty-day ministry, which spanned from Easter morning to the Ascension on the Mount of Olives as recorded in Act 1:3–11.

**Jn 20:15.** “*Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*” Jesus repeated the angels’ question. Again, John records Jesus as addressing a female with the respectful title *gune*, “woman,” just as He had with His mother at the wedding at Cana, with the Samaritan woman at the well, and the woman taken in adultery.<sup>25</sup> We see a similar pattern in other Gospels (for example, Mt 15:28; Lk 13:12). John will refer to Mary by her own name in a moment, but perhaps this use of *gune* harks back to Genesis with Eve as the first woman (Gen 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 Jesus’s motive, He would have spoken politely to her (Jn 19:26).

**Jn 20:15.** “*whom seekest thou?*” Jesus asked Mary the question that the angels had asked her. The question was to help her recognize Him. It’s a good question for all disciples. In Mary’s distracted and confused state of mourning, it is understandable that she would not have recognized nor expected Jesus.

**Jn 20:15.** “*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 (two days of rest), she probably assumed the gardeners had arrived to start their pruning, weeding, and watering in the cool of the morning. In between her sobs, she likely called out to one of them for any information about Jesus’s body: “Where have you laid Him?” But when the Gardener answered her, He called her by name, “Mary.”<sup>26</sup> There was something powerful in this recognition—one from the other side of the veil called this woman by name to bring her into a realm of greater light.

**Jn 20:16.** “*Mary.*” Mary in Hebrew is Mariam, Moses’s sister’s name. It was not until Jesus called Mary 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 to be the first witness of the resurrected Lord. Similarly, the young virgin Mary was the first witness of the Messiah’s birth (additionally, the first witness to receive a visit from angel Moroni with the golden plates was another woman with the same first name, Mary Whitmer).<sup>27</sup> The key is to recognize Him and to know His voice.

**Jn 20:16.** “*She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni.*” The New Testament uses this honorific title twice—here and in Mk 10:51, in which a blind man pleaded Jesus for sight. The extra suffix added on *rabbi* has been interpreted as an intensifier meaning “my great one, honorable sir, or my dear Rabbi.”<sup>28</sup>

**Jn 20:17.** “*Touch me not.*” This is also translated, “Do not hold on to me” (NIV) and “Do not cling to me” (ESV). Jesus may have meant, “Don’t detain me” or “Don’t embrace me.” The Greek word *haptomai* is also used to mean “cohabitation,” suggesting Jesus is not coming to live in the same way on earth.<sup>29</sup>



This appears to have been a short-term issue, as in two other visits Jesus made that day, He allowed disciples to touch Him (including the women in Mt 28:9–10 and ten Apostles in Jn 20:19).

**Jn 20:17.** *“for I am not yet ascended to my Father.”* Jesus spent three days and nights in the spirit world organizing missionary work.<sup>30</sup> By combining these scriptures, it makes sense that Jesus needed to go to His Father 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.

**Jn 20:17.** *“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 had appeared to them. Jesus intentionally chose Mary to be His first witness and for her to deliver a message to the other disciples.

**Jn 20:18.** *“Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples.”* By delivering the message this way (from Jesus to Mary to the Apostles), the Lord 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 culture’s view of women. The Gospel of John records Mary’s obedience and errand but not the Apostles’ disbelief as Mark’s Gospel does.

**Mk 16:9–11.** *“Mary Magdalene . . . told them . . . and they . . . believed not.”* The Gospel of Mark references the visit and the sad reality that some Mary Magdalene told did not believe her but doubted her witness. This adds an interesting perspective to Thomas’s doubting. It also demonstrates how the early disciples 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 the road to Emmaus—Mk 16:12–13; Lk 24:13–35*

**Mk 16:12 (Lk 24:15).** *“he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked.”* Also on Sunday morning, two disciples left Jerusalem to walk to the village of Emmaus (which is no longer identifiable for sure, though 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 weeklong celebration of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:5–6). Many Jews did not travel during that holy week but stayed in Jerusalem (Act 20:6). Because of this, it appears that the 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 Lk 24:16 reads, “They were kept from recognizing him,” while the JST adds, “Their eyes were . . . *covered*, that they *could* not know him.”

**Lk 24:17.** *“What are you discussing so intently . . . with sadness.”* Jesus joined in the conversation to reason with the men. (He tries to do the same with us, according to Isa 1:18.) His first question

referred to 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.

**Lk 24:18. "Cleopas."** One of the two men may have been the source of the conversation for Luke. It was probably Cleopas or Clopas, as Luke knew his name.<sup>31</sup> Cleopas may have been the same person as Clopas, married to one of the women named Mary mentioned at the cross and tomb.<sup>32</sup> The men's conversation assures us that the people in Jerusalem that weekend knew about Jesus's death and Resurrection. They assumed due to their companion's lack of knowledge that their fellow traveler (Jesus) must have been from out of town.

**Lk 24:25 (BSB). "O foolish ones, how slow are your hearts to believe. . . !"** Jesus saw His messiahship in a different light than the others did. It's interesting to note that Luke continues to tie the birth and death together by giving two more witnesses, paralleling Simeon and Anna at the temple (Lk 2:25, 36).

**Lk 24:27. "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded . . . things concerning himself."** Even without Jesus walking beside us, we now have many scriptures available to us in which we can find "types and shadows" of the Messiah in the details of the Mosaic laws, the tabernacle and temple structure and rituals, and even the very lives of the prophets (Hos 12:10; 1 Cor 10:1–11). The law acted as a schoolmaster to lead the people to Christ (Gal 3:24). We find this perspective especially repeated throughout the pages of the Book of Mormon.<sup>33</sup>

**Lk 24:29. "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 in this chapter as places and times of enlightenment (Lk 24:35). Jesus took the unleavened bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and gave it to the men. Our hope today is that our sacrament services can be just as revelatory. The men's recognition of the Savior happened at this breaking of bread, which generates the possibility that these two men, although not Apostles, may have been present at the Last Supper.<sup>34</sup>

**Lk 24:31. "their eyes were opened."** The veil over the disciples' eyes finally lifted. Luke uses the verb *dianoigo*, "open," for the second time in his Gospel. The first time it was used to describe Mary's cleansing sacrifice at the temple after giving birth to Jesus (Lk 2:23). Luke continues to link birth and death, in part to emphasize the new birth that the Resurrection provides.

**Lk 24:32. "Did not our heart burn within us?"** The men remembered that when Jesus had taught on the road they had felt a warmth. This is one way 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.<sup>35</sup> The JST adds a plural to include all our hearts. This is part of the baptism of fire. Being born again includes the Spirit's witness and the Spirit's immersion to cleanse and change our hearts.

**Lk 24:33. "they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem."** When the two men returned quickly to Jerusalem, they went to the place where the eleven Apostles (and probably others) were gathered. As they shared their story, they witnessed what had happened to them during the breaking of

bread. Luke includes the news that Simon Peter had also seen the Lord. Only Mark's Gospel records that "neither believed they them."

*Jesus visits the disciples—Lk 24:36–48; Jn 20:19–23; possibly Mk 16:14*

**Jn 20:19 (Lk 24:36).** "**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 including just the ten Apostles, yet no author limits the group to just Apostles or to ten people. (Mark alone gives a number, and he says "the eleven were gathered," which does not mean others were not there. Mark's account actually sounds more like Jesus's visitation a week later when Thomas was there.) Luke's account suggests that the two men who ran back from Emmaus were still present to share their story. John implies that many disciples had locked themselves together, which would have included the women who came back to this room at sunrise. Trying to harmonize these three accounts is difficult as Mark contradicts John, but it is safe to say the group included at least the ten Apostles and probably other believers.

**Jn 20:19. "Peace be unto you."** Jesus's greeting, *shalom* ("peace"), alleviated the group's fear. In the next sentence, the Lord repeated the greeting—the same promise He had given 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" (Jn 14:27).

**Lk 24:38. "Why are ye troubled?"** Once again, Luke uses words to describe the resurrected Lord that are only found in the birth accounts, tying the two together. (Zacharias and Mary were also troubled when the angel Gabriel came [Lk 1:12, 29].)

**Lk 24:39 (BSB).** "**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.<sup>36</sup> We assume from this experience that resurrected bodies have flesh and bones without blood.

**Jn 20:20. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."** This verse brings a new level of meaning to the word *glad*. The Greek word is also translated as "overjoyed" (NIV) and "rejoiced" (BSB). The disciples were all able to touch Him and examine the nail prints and wound in His side.

**Jn 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's commission, from the Father to the Son, used the word *apostello*, "sent," but the commission from the Son to the disciples used another word for "send," *pempo*. John never uses the word *apostle* in his Gospel nor in his epistles (only in the Book of Revelation). He either uses *twelve* or *disciples* (Jn 6:67). With the word *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 gives a commission to witness of Him.<sup>37</sup>

**Lk 24:45. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."** Just as He did on the road to Emmaus, the Lord used the scriptures to explain His mission and life. This was the first time Jesus referred to Himself as the Messiah (or *Christ* in Greek). The Old

Testament describes many anointed things (the temple altar, brazen sea, and priests, for example), but the promised Messiah was what they were pointing toward.

**Lk 24:49.** “*tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*” Many translations, including the NIV, ESV, and BSB, change “endued” and “endowed” to “clothe.” To endow with power is to clothe in the robes of righteousness (2 Ne 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 (Act 1–2). The Christian branch of Jerusalem was empowered and, as a result, were highly active for the next two decades until the persecution drove them out.<sup>38</sup>

**Lk 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 Master as He directed the Church from the other side of the veil. Each Gospel shares a different story from the Lord’s forty-day ministry after the Resurrection. Only Luke continues with a second volume in the Acts of the Apostles.

### *Jesus gives the Holy Spirit—Jn 20:22–23*

**Jn 20:22 (BSB).** “*He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’*” That Jesus breathed (*emphusao*) on the disciples echoes Gen 2:7, in which “the 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 wordplay with *pneuma*, which can be translated as “breath, spirit, or wind.” John used the same wordplay with Nicodemus in Jn 3:5–8. When a similar event was recorded in 3 Ne 18:36–37, the Lord gave the Apostles authority to confirm the Holy Spirit by 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 (in the Nativity account in Lk 1:15 and the baptism in Mk 1:9–12). John the Baptist summarized Jesus’s mission by saying He would come to “baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Lk 3:16). Jesus’s gift was the baptism of the Spirit. Up to this point, the Twelve had demonstrated the power of God by casting out devils, performing healings, and preaching with power, but they did not have the power and authority to give the Gift of the Holy Ghost until after Jesus’s Resurrection.

There is a distinction between the gifts or power of the Spirit and the gift of the Holy Ghost. As the Gospels now stand, they explain that the Spirit did not fully function during Jesus’s ministry, even though the gifts and fruits of the Spirit were present.<sup>39</sup> In Joseph Smith’s terms, the disciples received the authority and right to receive and give the gift of the Holy Ghost after the Lord’s Resurrection. The greatest outpouring of the Spirit to the Apostles came afterward on the day of Pentecost (Act 1:8; 2:4).

**Jn 20:23 (CSB).** “*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.*” The Lord gave the Apostles the keys to yet another divine gift. Elder Bruce R. 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).<sup>40</sup>

*Thomas’s faith strengthened with Jesus’s visitation—Jn 20:24–25; Mk 16:14*

**Jn 20:24.** “*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 Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Jn 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, he stayed with his brethren, and was where he was supposed to be.<sup>41</sup> The problem was that he allowed his fears to arrest his faith. But despite his fear, Thomas remains with his brethren and is still with them a week later.

**Jn 20:26 (BSB).** “*Eight days later, His disciples were once again inside with the doors locked.*” This happened again on a Sunday, adding even more importance to this new day for worship because it was the day of both the Lord’s Resurrection and visitation. I think Mark’s account of Jesus’s 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 facts only fit the second Sabbath visitation.

**Jn 20:26.** “*Peace be unto you.*” The Lord greeted the disciples once again 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 to feel both peace and cheer. The Spirit’s gift of peace and hope comes as we diligently seek both these blessings from God.

**Jn 20:27 (NIV).** “*Stop doubting and believe.*” Thomas’s doubts were reasonable, but Jesus asks all His disciples to replace their doubts with faith.<sup>42</sup> Could this also be a command? This statement from the Lord is like His earlier counsel/commands to “be of good cheer,” which He says at very challenging times.<sup>43</sup> God wants us to make choices for ourselves, as taught in the Book of Mormon: “The Messiah cometh . . . that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. . . . They have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Ne 2:26). This invitation to choose can also apply to our emotions.

**Jn 20:29.** “*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*” The Lord’s reprimand was so filled with love that Thomas could have hope of becoming better rather than despairing at his foolishness. Now the Apostles as a group, including Thomas, could act as eyewitnesses of the Resurrected Jesus. Christianity furnished others who saw as a foundation of witnesses (such as in Act 10:41). But the emphasis here is the importance of believing through faith on the message of the messengers, not on the messengers themselves. 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 Ne 12:2). The next

two times the Lord appeared, Thomas was still there with the disciples (Jn 21:2; Act 1:13). He became enduring Thomas, not doubting Thomas.

### *John's purpose identified—Jn 20:30–31*

**Jn 20:30 (NIV).** “*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.”<sup>44</sup>

**Jn 20:31.** “*these are written so that you may believe . . . by believing you may have life in his name.*” John states that his purpose in writing is to bring souls to believe so they can receive eternal life. His writings are often referred to as the Spiritual Gospel because he writes of spiritual things. Other scripture also focuses on bearing record of Christ or typifying Him.<sup>45</sup> John's purpose goes further. We are not only to believe His witness but nourish it into a belief that grows toward “life in his name,” or exaltation (all four uses of “life,” *zoe*, by John reference eternal life—1:4; 3:36; 6:68).

### **The Apostles Go Fishing—Jn 21:1–8<sup>46</sup>**

**Jn 21:1.** “*Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias.*” This section refers to the forty-day ministry 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's glory during His ministry, and now it was the last place to have that same honor.

**Jn 21:2.** “*There were together.*” Five Apostles are mentioned by name, and two remain unnamed. The five include Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John. These are the same five that were originally introduced as early disciples in Jn 1:35–50 (plus two others: Andrew and Philip). It seems significant that John names Thomas after Peter, directly following his retelling of the time when Thomas doubted Jesus's Resurrection. This is the only occurrence of Thomas's name in a list of Apostles. The Apostles had probably gone to Galilee in response to the Lord's directions in Mt 26:32 (“After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee”) and in Mt 28:10 (“Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me”).<sup>47</sup>

**Jn 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 (Lk 22:36). Because of this, it seems natural that as they waited for direction from the Lord, they returned to what they used to do professionally. They probably still owned their boat—they had used it during the ministry.<sup>48</sup> This way they could help provide for their families or possibly 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. They surely all missed Jesus, as any of us would after spending three years beside Him every day. Whatever their motivation, when they returned home to Galilee, they went night 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 (D&C 58:26).

The Apostles' relationship to Jesus at the time was more of the relationship between a master and disciple, or servant. They were used to taking orders and following as sheep following their shepherd, not coming up with their own plans. In fact, they had to be very flexible in their thoughts and actions as they followed Jesus since He often asked them to do very shocking things (healing and gleaning on the Sabbath, speaking to and instructing women, walking through Samaria and eating unclean food). They got to a point where they learned to watch and wait to see what Jesus did rather than follow their cultural norms.

**Jn 21:3. “that night they caught nothing.”** John uses his characteristic irony in saying that the whole fishing expedition was spent for naught. His mentions of night here once again use darkness as a symbol (this time it is clear that the disciples need direction). Commercial fishing was often done at night because the fish swam closer to the surface at that time; also, fishers could sell the fresh fish in the morning. But that night, the group hadn't caught anything to sell.

**Jn 21:4. “Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not.”** The fishermen did not recognize Jesus, probably because of the dim dawn light or Jesus's distance from the group or because He was an unexpected visitor. The person on the shore gave them directions so they could catch fish—He told them to cast their net down again but specifically on the right side of their boat. He called them *paidon*, “boys” or “lads” (AB). The disciples took Jesus's advice and tried one more time. A miracle occurred: the net was filled.

**Jn 21:7. “It is the Lord.”** This statement coincides with the “I am” formula used throughout John.<sup>49</sup> Either John's younger eyes or sensitive heart recognized the source of the miracle as Jesus. John immediately communicated this to his fishing partner and friend Peter. Fisherman usually 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, possibly a cloak, and tied it around himself. (The Greek word is the same used when Jesus tied a towel around Himself to wash the Apostles' feet in Jn 13:4–5). Then Peter literally “threw himself” into the sea and swam to shore.

**Jn 21:8. “And the other disciples came . . . dragging the net with fishes.”** John assures readers that the disciples did not abandon Jesus's gift but instead rowed the little boat the last hundred yards (a cubit is about eighteen inches, or from elbow to fingertip) back to the shore. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus promised to make His disciples fishers of men (Mt 4:19; Mk 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.<sup>50</sup>

*Jesus instructed the disciples in fishing by love—Jn 21:9–14*

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

**Jn 21:11 (NIV).** “*It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.*” 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.<sup>51</sup> Symbolically, because this story led to a call for greater missionary work, the 153 fish can imply that the gospel net would extend to all kindreds, tongues, and people.

More important than the exact number is the fact 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. Previously 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 (Lk 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 had provided, “Bring of the fish which you have now caught,” and Peter went back to help drag the net ashore.

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

**Jn 21:15.** “*when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas.*” Back in Jn 1:42, Jesus gave Simon a nickname or new name: “Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.” From then on, the Gospel of John always used Cephas, Peter, and “stone” when Jesus referred to him. But here, Jesus did not call him by the ennobling or familiar name “Rock.” Was this intentional? Perhaps because the author had just introduced him as Simon Peter, it was too redundant, and so he shortened it. But that is not consistent with the author’s earlier pattern. Jesus referred to Peter thirty-two times in the Gospel of John and never dropped Peter, except here. Could Jesus’s less familiar name be “challenging his friendship”?<sup>52</sup>

**Jn 21:15.** “*lovest thou me more than these?*” “These” likely referred to the nets, boats, fish, or more generally, the Apostles’ occupations and mortal desires. The word “love” here is more nuanced in Greek than in English. Throughout the Gospel of John, the author (or authors) carefully chose between two words for “love”: *agape* and *phileo* (even though in Greek there are at least five words meaning “love”).<sup>53</sup> In English one cannot tell, but this conversation includes both *agape* and *phileo*:

- 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 by using a different word the third time? After studying each use of *love* in John and the rest of the New Testament, I believe that the answer is yes, and other Greek scholars agree.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps Peter did not initially understand the Lord’s distinctions of love, but the author communicated a consistent difference.

I examined all occurrences of the word *love* in the Gospel of John and found that *philo* was used one-fourth of the time, and it was always said by someone other than Jesus (with the one exception here in Jn 21:17).<sup>55</sup> And except in this verse, when Jesus used the word *love*, the author of John always used the Greek word *agape* (either as a verb, *agapao*, or as a noun, *agape*). Some have argued that the two words had similar meanings so were recorded for variety. Yet, throughout all his writings, John never does that.

**Jn 21:15–17 (BSB). “Feed My lambs. . . Shepherd My sheep. . . Feed My sheep.”** Jesus’s second request was to literally “tend my sheep.” By repeating His request three times, was Jesus giving Peter a gentle chastisement for denying Him three times? President David O. McKay suggested that in this threefold questioning of Peter, the Lord let him make good on his error. “It purged his soul with reaffirmation of loyalty and energetic action.”<sup>56</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland suggested the Lord corrected Peter’s priorities and called him back to the apostolic work.

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.<sup>57</sup>

Whatever the motivation, Peter internalized these specific words of counsel 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 Pet 5:2–3).

### *Jesus prophesies of Peter’s and John’s future—Jn 21:18–19*

**Jn 21:18. “when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee.”** This appears to prophesy 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.”<sup>58</sup> The tradition says he did not feel worthy to die as the Lord had done, so he hung upside down.

**Jn 21:23.** “*went this saying abroad . . . that disciple should not die.*” John would not have to die, because the Lord answered his wish to continue to serve God in this world until His Second Coming. We have a second and third witness of this in 3 Ne 28 and D&C 7. John the Beloved and the three Nephites became translated beings and experienced some sort of change to their body. The Lord promised all four that when their missions are finished, they will be resurrected in a twinkling (3 Ne 28:6–8, 36–40). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that “translated bodies are designed for future missions.”<sup>59</sup>

#### *John’s final testimony – Jn 21:24–25*

**Jn 21:24.** “*This is the disciple which testifieth of these things.*” The author finally identifies himself as the disciple who leaned on Jesus’s breast at the Last Supper. Earlier, he identified himself only as “the beloved disciple” or one of the disciples.

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

#### *Jesus’s post-Resurrection appearance in Galilee—Mt 28:16–20; Mk 16:15–18*

**Mt 28:16.** “*the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain.*” The designated meeting place in a mountain is consistent with a temple parallel or a high place for a holy meeting for heavenly things. Much of the forty-day ministry literature included prayer circles and similar parallels to modern temple rituals.<sup>60</sup> We also see remnants of temple worship in the New Testament epistles: “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Cor 11:11); “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Pet 1:10); “Honour unto the wife . . . and as being heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).

**Mt 28:17.** “*they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*” Was the doubting account harking back to the time when the Apostles doubted the women’s witness as well as to Thomas’s doubts, or did it relate to doubts at Jesus’s appearance? We have scriptural examples of others doubting an angel’s witness, such as Zacharias in the temple. Perhaps some Apostles fell into that category.

**Mt 28:18.** “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” His atoning sacrifice qualified Jesus to receive even more power over this earth and to redeem the children of God. Jesus promised to share some of His power as He sent the Apostles out with keys to baptize and do “all things” (Mt 28:20).

**Mt 28:19 (Mk 16:15).** “*Go . . . and teach all nations.*” This was a vastly different mission call and focus than Jesus’s three-year mission, during which the teaching, healing, and miracles witnessed His messiahship to the Jews. Jesus looked forward to the time when the disciples would preach His gospel to all nations. They would not realize this until after Peter’s vision in Joppa, but Jesus was opening

the door to Gentiles. The early Christians were expecting the end and had been instructed by Jesus to watch until the end.

**Mk 16:17.** “*And these signs shall follow them that believe.*” Mark’s account includes more examples of all the disciples receiving Jesus’s power in the form of the gifts of the Spirit: casting out devils, speaking in tongues, healing, and protection from poison and serpents. The requirement for these gifts or signs is belief.

**Mt 28:20.** “*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway.*” In the birth narratives in Matthew, Jesus was introduced as Emmanuel, meaning “God with us” (Mt 1:23). Now at the end of this Gospel, Matthew emphasized this again as Jesus departed after His Resurrection and said similarly, “I am with you always” (NIV). Each of the five sections of Matthew ends with the concluding phrase “When Jesus had ended his saying.”<sup>61</sup> But this section does not; if His disciples will obey, Jesus promises a continuation of revelation.

## Notes

1 Robert L. Millet, “The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead (D&C 138),” in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Craig K. Manscill (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 314–331.

2 The Old English roots of the word *gospel* are derived from *god* (“good”) and *pel* (“story or news”). The word refers to Jesus’s birth, death, and Resurrection.

3 Lynne Hilton Wilson, “Jesus’ Atonement Foretold through His Birth,” in *To Save the Lost: An Easter Celebration*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 103–126.

4 Mt 28:10; Mk 15:40–41; 16:7; Lk 8:2; Jn 20:3–18; 1 Cor 11:5, 11; 14:12; for more see the note to my comments on Mt 28:5.

5 For example, when Alma the Elder first established churches, he instructed the people to focus solely on Jesus’s redemption and how to receive it: “They should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people” (Mosi 18:20).

6 InHee C. Berg, “The Gospel Traditions Inferring to Jesus’ Proper Burial through the Depictions of Female Funerary Kinship Roles,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 47, no. 4 (2017): 216–229.

7 *Mishnah, Moed: Shabbath* 7:4; 8:3, 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 Lk 24:1. A later rabbinic source (written after the destruction of the temple), in the Mishnah, *Shabbath* 23:5, explains that on the Sabbath, “they may make ready all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it,

provided that they do not move any member of it. . . . They may not close a corpse's eyes on the Sabbath; nor may they do so on a weekday at the moment when the soul is departing; and he that closes the eyes [of the dying man] at the moment when the soul is departing, such a one is a shedder of blood."

9 Judaeus Philo, *Special Laws III*, 7 vols. (London, UK: William Heinemann, 1967), 3:169, 171. "The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house. . . . A woman then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion."

10 Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante, eds., *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 155, 186. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 359. Later records include the Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 2:4, 58c. R. Josiah said, "He who gazes at a woman eventually comes to sin, and he who looks even at a woman's heel will beget degenerate children." Another translation reads, "He that looks upon a woman's heel is guilty of an act of lewdness." This led to the counsel for men never to walk behind a woman—even if she were his wife—in case he might see her heels. Talmud, *Berakot* 61a.

11 John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 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 (ca. 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."

12 Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 6.3, 9. Jerusalem, which usually housed between 20,000 and 30,000 people, explodes during the time of the annual pilgrimage feasts. Josephus claimed there were 2.7 million 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 still be bursting at the seams.

13 W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

14 *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 in about AD 200. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXII* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 982. Also see 1 Mac 2:14; 3:47.

15 S. Kent Brown, *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.

16 *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]."



17 Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing, 2015).

18 Brown, *John XIII–XXII*, 984.

19 Josephus, *Against Apion*, 25. “A woman is inferior to her husband in all things.” Also, from Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.219: “Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex,” along with a list of others barred from witnessing. Josephus felt that Adam was cursed in the Garden of Eden “because he weakly submitted to the counsel of his wife.” Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.49. A beloved Jewish writer from the century the New Testament, Ben Sira, wrote many statements like the following: “Better is the iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn, and a woman bringing shame and reproach” and “Give not to son or wife, brother or friend, power over thee while thou livest. . . . In all thy works keep the pre-eminence.” *Ecclesiasticus*, 33:20, 23; 42:140. *Mishnah, Shebuoth* 4:1 claims that women should not be trusted because Sarah lied (Gen 18:5). That passage in the Mishnah also contains a list of unacceptable witnesses in Judaic courts of law including ten classes of people: women, slaves, minors, lunatics, the deaf, the blind, the wicked, the contemptible, relatives, and interested parties. Shepherds fell among the wicked as they grazed their flocks on others' lands.

20 Paul Gaechter, *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Lore Schultheiss, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2013), <https://chiasmusresources.org/literary-art-gospel-matthew>. 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 Mt 28:9–10 is a latter addition to the 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).”

21 Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures, vol. 5, The Gospels* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 5, 454.

22 See my notes on Mt 27:62–65.

23 Peter's personality is similar in Luke and Acts of the Apostles. He becomes the main character in the first half of Acts. Luke includes Peter performing the same miracles in Acts that Jesus had in His ministry, demonstrating that the same miracles, authority, teachings, and church were passed down from Jesus to Peter, which was then repeated for Paul.

24 Jn 19:25; Mt 27:61; Mk 15:47.

25 Jn 2:4; 4:7–42; 8:9–10.

26 The Gardener is a powerful metaphor for 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 Superman, but more often than not, He is the Gardener.

27 This happened early on a spring morning in Fayette, New York. After Mary Whitmer milked the cow and left the barn, she was met by the angel Moroni, who showed her the plates. See Chris Heimerdinger, “5 Women Who Are Witnesses of the Physical Golden Plates,” Book of Mormon Central, March 2, 2018, <https://bookofmormoncentral.org/blog/5-women-who-are-witnesses-of-the-physical-golden-plates>.

28 Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 369. 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 century for the great master ruler and teacher Gamaliel. Cyrus Adler et al., *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906), s.v. “Rabbi.”

29 Another interpretation is that Mary fulfills a type and shadow given in 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.”

30 1 Pet 3:19–20; 4:6; D&C 138:19, 30.

31 Brown, *John XIII–XXII*, 1117.

32 Jn 19:25; see my notes on that verse. Names in the New Testament are often written with different spellings and even in different languages. This is the case because it was a time when common people often knew three different languages and spelling was not standardized. For example, the names James and Joses are interchanged in Matthew and Mark.

33 See, for example, 2 Ne 11:4; Mosi 3:15; 13:10, 31; Alm 13:16; 25:15; 33:19.

34 This is especially plausible if Mary the wife of Clopas were one of the women preparing and serving the meal.

35 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.

36 3 Ne 11:14–15. We learn that Jesus appeared to the Nephites just under a year after the great destruction at His death by comparing 3 Ne 8:5 with 3 Ne 11:18.

37 Definition given by Dr. John Perry, Cardinal Stritch University class, 2003.

38 Act 1:12; 12:25; Rom 15:25; Gal 2:1.

39 Fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22–23). Paul’s list of the gifts of the Spirit include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, the gift of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:8–10). Perhaps the lack of the Spirit is emphasized because the final editors of the New Testament had a trinitarian view.

40 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, UT : Deseret Book, 1966), 294.

41 Patrick Mason, *Planted* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2015).

42 Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come Join with Us,” October 2013 general conference, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).

43 Mt 9:2; 14:27; Mk 6:50; 10:49.

44 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. 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; see also pp. 9, 42, 110, 210, 327–331.

45 Hos 10:12; Mose 6:63; 2 Ne 11:4.

46 Jn 21:1–16 shares about ten similarities with the experience of the Apostles fishing in Lk 5:1–11, but the timing is completely different.

47 Also see Mk 16:7.

48 The disciples likely owned the boat mentioned in Mt 13:2; 15:39; Mk 5:21; Jn 6:21.

49 Brown, *John XIII–XXII*, 1072.

50 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 102.

51 Brown, *John XIII–XXII*, 1074. Some suggest the number points to the fullness of the Church’s perfection. They derive this from seventeen cubed. Seventeen is made from combining two symbolic numbers: seven, representing complete, whole, or perfect, with ten, the number for the Decalogue. I think this is a stretch.

52 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1102.

53 The most common Greek words for *love*, in order, are (1) *agape*, “of people: 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” (this is the root for *erotic*).

54 Richard C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel 11–21* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 2008), 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.”

55 Uses of *agape*: Jn 3:35; 11:5; 12:43; 13:1; 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20; 1 Jn 2:10, 15; 3:10–11, 14, 18, 23; 4:7–8, 10–12, 19–21; 5:1–2; 2 Jn 1:1, 5; 3 Jn 1:1; Rev 1:5; 12:11; 20:9. Uses of *phileo*: Jn 11:3, 36; 20:2; 21:15–17 (in both verses 15 and 16, the first instances of “love” are *agapao*); Rev 22:15.

56 Jackson and Millet, *Studies in Scripture*, 5:466.

57 Jeffrey R. Holland, “The First Great Commandment,” *October* 2012 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org. The quote 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.”

58 Origen, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis III*.

59 “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842],” p. 1229, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/401>. Transfiguration is different than the change made to become a transfigured being.

60 Hugh Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” *BYU Studies* 19, no. 1 (1978): 4–78; David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 573; Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 313.

61 Mt 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1.