

Bible Study Notes

The Upper Room Event (the first one)

4/27/20

Passages:

- Luke 24:36-49 (NLT)
- John 20: 19-23

This week's study focuses on the event where the risen Jesus joins His disciples and close followers in the Upper Room "behind locked doors". In the Luke Gospel this is immediately after the Road to Emmaus event when the two travelers join the 11 Disciples and others in Jerusalem. John doesn't reference the Road to Emmaus event, but he does place this event on the day of Easter.

The Luke text is the main passage and is included here in the NLT translation. The John passage will be referred to as appropriate, please use your Bible for that passage.

The Luke passage can be broken into 3 segments as below. John's Gospel includes some of the same material, but he follows a different structure.

The Luke passage follows last week's story by being a well-written, detailed account written to convince early followers. The John account is more directed to showing Jesus as our Risen Lord and Savior.

Luke 24:36-49 (NLT)

Section 1: Proof of the Resurrection

36 And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. 37 But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost! 38 "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? 39 Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." 40 As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he ate it as they watched.

- This event happens just as the two travelers to Emmaus have returned to Jerusalem and are getting ready to tell their story.
- John describes the disciples and followers as being behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews". Luke makes no such mention.
- John does not mention the Road to Emmaus story, but also refers to the same day the women found an empty grave.

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- Luke describes people as scared and doubtful, John does not. However, John adds the “Doubting Thomas” story which is not in Luke.
- In the Road to Emmaus story Luke records the travelers as not recognizing Jesus. In this story he shows the disciples and followers not believing, with doubt and fear.
- Jesus’ first words were “Peace be with you”. This relates to Jesus’ promise to give them peace.
- John records Jesus saying these words twice. Once when He appears, and again after the Disciples believe. The symbolism is that we can only truly have peace after we believe in Jesus, ie, we receive peace from Jesus, our Lord and Savior.
- Jesus offers two proofs to address their doubts and fears. He invites them to look and touch him where the nails were.
- Luke details the disciples specifically thinking Jesus is a ghost or spirit. The act of eating was the second proof that Jesus was a physical person and risen from the dead. John does not include the act of eating.
- The Gospel of John does not record the disciples having doubt and fear, he does record Jesus showing His hands and side to them. The disciples believed as soon as they saw Him and got over their shock at seeing Him alive.

Section 2: Interpretation of Scripture

44 Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.

- Luke again repeats the theme of “opening their minds to Scripture” as in the Road to Emmaus story.
- In both stories Luke makes the point that Scripture can only be understood through Jesus. The Holy Spirit opens our minds today to understand Scripture. I have compared this to the layers of an onion. There are many layers of understanding to the Scriptures. As we grow in faith and the Spirit, and as we reach deeper understandings of God’s word, more is revealed to us in the Scriptures.

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Section 3: Commissioning of the disciples

47 It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' 48 You are witnesses of all these things. 49 "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

- Both Luke and John include Jesus commissioning His followers to go into the world and proclaim the Good News of Jesus.
 - Luke records Jesus as referring to an event in the future (Pentecost) when the disciples will receive the Holy Spirit.
 - John has Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit into the Disciples "on the spot". This is John's version of Pentecost.
 - In both Gospel stories Jesus is commissioning all of His followers; the 11 Disciples and the other disciples/followers. It is important to understand that this commission was not to the leaders (or pastors) but to all believers. This is a universal call for all of us to go out and Share the Good News!
 - John's passage is shorter but has some deep theological themes. For John sin is not an act or omission. Sin is being blind to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. John talks about the followers forgiving or retaining others' sin. This is more about people accepting or rejecting a relationship with God through Jesus than some power given to the disciples.
 - There is symbolism in John that Jesus lives because He breathes life into His followers via the Spirit and His followers then go out into the world.
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- **Next week:**
 - Events in the Upper Room a week later: Doubting Thomas
 - John 20:24-31