

The title "EASTER at grace" is centered at the top of the page. "EASTER" is in a large, bold, yellow serif font, and "at grace" is in a smaller, yellow, cursive script font. The background of the top section is a photograph of a tombstone in a field with a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a lens flare effect behind the word "EASTER".

EASTER at grace

SERIES OVERVIEW

Starting Easter 2025, we will be launching a significant, multi-part series exploring the gospel of Matthew. On Easter weekend we'll begin at the end of the book, with the resurrected Christ sending his followers into the world. The following week we will return to the beginning of the story. We will complete the gospel in four major parts:

- Part I - Spring 2025: Matthew 1, 3-10
- Part II - Fall 2025: Matthew 11-20
- Part III - December 2025: Matthew 2 (The Magi)
- Part IV - Spring 2026: Matthew 21-28

o Note: We will end this whole series on Easter Sunday 2026 right where we began: with the resurrected Christ encountering his followers after rising from the grave.

Now, you may be asking, "Why Matthew? And why such a long series?" Great questions. We will be exploring the gospel of Matthew so deeply because it was the most widely read and copied gospel in the early Church. It is viewed by many today as the first "discipleship manual" because it contains some of the most direct and provocative teachings by Jesus. It also gives probably the clearest perspective of how Jesus understood the nature of God's "upside-down" kingdom, which he had come to inaugurate. Like the earliest Christ-followers, we have a lot to learn from this spectacular collection of the teachings of our rabbi. Walking so slowly through the book will give us the time we need to engage Jesus in our own discipleship journeys.

WEEK 1 - EASTER (THE GREAT COMMISSION) OVERVIEW

For Easter 2025 we will join the first disciples on a hillside in Galilee to meet the resurrected Jesus as he launches them out into a reality-transforming mission. In this message we will consider how the resurrection of Christ confirmed his true authority, transformed his relationship to his followers, and kicked-off a world-healing mission which we are still a part of today.

I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What musicals can you think of that have a big Act I finale, as Barry described?
2. Read Matthew 28:1-7, 16-20. What is the "Act I finale" in the story of Jesus, and what is Act II all about?
3. What truth makes it possible for us to think and look and act like Jesus? (Matthew 28:20)
4. Barry asked us to evaluate the state of our hearts with Jesus. Discuss what each question means and give examples of how you would know the answer. Consider your personal answer to the questions, and share with your group if you are comfortable doing so.
 - a. Do you trust Jesus? (Matthew 28:17)
 - b. Are you growing in Jesus? (Matthew 28:20)
 - c. Is the Spirit of Jesus within you? (Matthew 28:20)