

It's All About Jesus

Session 5

March 31, 2024

The Resurrection of Jesus

The Point: Jesus rose again to give us victory over death.

Session Passage: Luke 24:1-8,38-43

Luke 24:1-6a

Connection to the Point: The tomb of Jesus was empty.

Setting for Luke 24. The inspired human writers of the Bible did not divide their writing with chapter or verse numbers. These divisions were added much later. [Our New Testament chapter divisions were added by Stephen Langton about 1227. Our New Testament verse divisions were added by Robert Estienne (also called Stephanus) in 1551.] Luke wrote one continuous story, so Luke 24:1 immediately follows 23:55-56 without interruption. These verses report women who had followed Jesus from Galilee saw Jesus's body placed in the tomb and prepared spices and perfumes before resting on the Sabbath.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning (v. 1). All four Gospels use similar phrasing. According to Jewish time, the week began on what we call Sunday. The Jewish daytime hours began at 6 a.m. Likely the women were anxious to complete the task of anointing Jesus's body for burial, so *very early in the morning* would have been on Sunday morning near dawn. Celebration of Jesus's resurrection is the reason most Christian churches worship on Sunday. Soon after Jesus's resurrection, the early church began to worship on Sunday rather than Saturday, the Sabbath (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).

They came to the tomb (v. 1). *They* refers to the women Luke had mentioned two verses earlier (Luke 23:55). They knew which tomb because they had been there approximately thirty-six hours earlier (late Friday afternoon; v. 54). Each of our four Gospels focuses on different aspects of Jesus's resurrection. This focus led the writers to record different details in their accounts as the Holy Spirit inspired them. The names and exact number of women are uncertain. Mary Magdalene is listed by all four Gospel writers (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1). Mary the mother of James ("the other Mary") is listed by three writers (Matt. 28:1, Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). Only Mark mentions Salome (16:1). Only Luke includes Joanna (24:10). Luke also lists an unknown number of "other women" (24:10).

Bringing the spices they had prepared (v. 1). Upon death, a body was typically wrapped in cloth along with various aromatic spices that helped offset the odor of decaying flesh. The body was placed on a slab or ledge in a carved out tomb or cave where it was left to fully decompose.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb (v. 2). Matthew reports that an angel rolled the stone away from the entrance to Jesus's tomb (Matt. 28:2). Perhaps the exact time of Jesus's resurrection was signaled by an earthquake.

They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus (v. 3). Luke did not specify which women entered Jesus's tomb. Bodies were usually placed in a central part of the tomb (cave) for about a year until decomposition left only bones. Then these bones were usually placed in a jar or clay pot and moved into a niche on the side of the tomb. Had Jesus's body been there, the women could not have missed it since it was a new tomb without other bodies (John 19:41). This is the only time Luke used the title *Lord Jesus* in his Gospel but he used it several times for the risen Jesus in his second volume, Acts (1:21; 4:33; 8:16). While the changed

lives of the disciples is the most important evidence of Jesus's resurrection, the empty tomb also is critical. Had the tomb contained Jesus's body, it would have been evidence that He had not risen.

While they were perplexed about this (v. 4). Naturally, the women did not understand what had happened. The word translated *perplexed* is also rendered "wondered." We get our English word *consternation* from the Latin translation of this Greek word. The Greek grammar implies a continuing action.

Suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes (v. 4). *Dazzling clothes* indicates the two were angels. *Dazzling* is also translated as "gleaming" and "lightning flashing." John reported that the angels were sitting where Jesus's head and feet had been prior to His resurrection (John 20:12). In Matthew's account, only one of the angels was noticed (Matt. 28:2-4). Later in this chapter, Luke mentioned "angels" (Luke 24:23).

So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground (v. 5). Realizing they were in the presence of holy beings, the women reacted as most people did to the presence of angels in the Bible—they were terrified and showed reverence by bowing down to the ground.

Why are you looking for the living among the dead? (v. 5). In the Bible, the first thing an angel usually said to a human was to stop being afraid. Luke skipped these words and got to the central point. The angels questioned the women. While they were still in Galilee and as they traveled to Jerusalem, Jesus had repeatedly told His disciples about His death and resurrection (Luke 9:22; 18:33). The women had heard Jesus's teachings (24:8). Yet the women were looking for *the living among the dead*. They had seen Jesus's body in the tomb; they expected to find it there again.

He is not here, but he has risen! (v. 6). While the women were thinking about the question, the angels continued speaking, announcing the most important news in history: Jesus has risen. In Mark, the angel said: "Don't be alarmed, . . . You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him" (Mark 16:6). Matthew reported the angel's speech this way: "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay" (Matt. 28:5-6). The slight difference in wording demonstrates the authenticity of these independent accounts. Instead of a canned, coordinated response, each writer gave corroborating testimony to the event as the Holy Spirit inspired him.

Luke 24:6b-8

Connection to the Point. Jesus foretold His resurrection.

Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee (v. 6). This verse is a continuation of the angels' address to the women that Luke began in verse 5. This conversation continued in verse 6 as the angels asked the women to remember what Jesus said to them when He was still in Galilee. Perhaps the angels were referring to Jesus's words recorded in Luke (9:22,44 or 18:31-34 as He neared Jericho) or another time in Matthew or Mark that Jesus predicted His death.

It is necessary (v. 7). The angels clarified the meaning of their words for the women by reminding them of Jesus's words: *It is necessary that the Son of Man . . .* The Greek verb translated *it is necessary* also means *must, ought to, should happen*, and refers to a divine necessity or moral obligation. This Greek word is used 101 times in the New Testament (8 times in Matt.; 6 in Mark; 18 in Luke; 10 in John; 22 in Acts). The books of Luke and Acts contain about 40 percent of its usage in the New Testament. Jesus used the word 15 of the 18 times it occurs in Luke, frequently referring to the fulfillment of prophecy (as it does on the angels' lips in verse 7).

The Son of Man (v. 7). *Son of Man* was Jesus's favorite title for Himself and was used over eighty times in the Gospels. This title reflects Jesus as being fully God and fully man (Immanuel) as well as His messianic mission. It reveals His identification with us as human beings. In our Gospels, with the exception of the crowd quoting Jesus in John 12:34 and the angels quoting Jesus in Luke 24:7, only Jesus used this title.

Be betrayed into the hands of sinful men (v. 7). The angels reminded the women of three statements Jesus had made. First, Jesus said He would be *betrayed* into the hands of sinful men (Luke 9:44). The disciples (including the women) had not understood what Jesus had meant when He made that statement (v. 45). Judas's action in the garden of Gethsemane fulfilled this prophecy about Jesus (22:47-48). Matthew's account focuses more on this action fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Matt. 26:47-56).

Be crucified (v. 7). Second, the angels reminded the women of Jesus's prophecy that He would be killed (Matt. 20:19; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). The Romans used crucifixion for the worst type of violent criminals, frequently those who had committed murder.

And rise on the third day (v. 7). The third statement the angels reminded the women of was Jesus's prophecy that He would rise on the third day (Matt. 20:19; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). Jesus was crucified, died, and placed in the tomb on Friday. According to Jewish time, any part of a night or day was considered as a full day. Friday was the first day, Saturday the second day, and Sunday the third day. Jesus was raised from the dead sometime before dawn on Sunday morning.

The significance of Jesus's resurrection. We cannot overstate the significance of Jesus's return to life. Indeed, it is the most important event in the history of the world! Jesus's resurrection validated all He said and did. About twenty-five years later, Paul defined the gospel to the Corinthians by writing, "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Without the resurrection, the good news is not complete. Because of the resurrection, Christians can face death victoriously (Rom. 8:11,37-39; 1 Cor. 15:54-57). These references reveal the importance early Christians placed on the gospel message, that focused on Jesus's death and resurrection. To overestimate the importance of Jesus's resurrection is impossible. Early Christian preaching focused almost entirely on Jesus's death and resurrection as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Acts 2:14-41; 1 Cor. 2:2).

And they remembered his words (v. 8). After the angels had finished speaking, the women remembered Jesus's words He had spoken to them when they were in Galilee. Luke then recorded that the women reported this to Jesus's disciples, who did not believe them (Luke 24:9,11). Nevertheless, Peter went to the tomb to see for himself (v. 12).

Luke 24:38-43

Connection to the Point. The disciples saw Jesus after His resurrection.

Setting for Luke 24:38-43. After Peter ran to the tomb, stooped and looked in, and saw only Jesus's grave clothes, he went away amazed, wondering what had happened (Luke 24:12). In verses 13-35, Luke reported Jesus's appearance to Cleopas and another unnamed disciple who were walking to Emmaus, a town about seven miles from Jerusalem. Although they failed to recognize Him, Jesus walked and talked with them, and taught them for perhaps several hours. When they stopped for the night, they invited Jesus to eat with them. When He blessed the bread, they recognized who He was (v. 31), immediately returned to Jerusalem (v. 33), and found the Eleven and others who were gathered (v. 33). Cleopas and the other disciple reported their encounter with Jesus to the group (v. 35). As they were speaking, Jesus appeared and said, "Peace to you!" (a

typical Jewish greeting; v. 36). Luke reported: “But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost” (v. 37).

Why are you troubled? (v. 38). As He had done so many times before, Jesus addressed His disciples’ concerns, even though they had not been spoken. John reported that the doors were locked because the disciples feared the Jews (John 20:19). In His resurrected body, Jesus appeared and not only spoke to them with comforting words (Luke 24:36), but also addressed their concerns about His being a ghost (v. 37). On Friday afternoon they had seen Him die. Now, they knew His body was no longer in the tomb. Although Jesus had spoken to them several times about His death and resurrection, they certainly didn’t understand what He had meant. The word translated *troubled* can also be rendered *upset*, *terrified*, or *frightened*. Likely these disciples had many emotions running through their minds.

And why do doubts arise in your hearts? (v. 38). The word translated *doubts* here can also be rendered *thoughts* or *arguments*. We get our English word *dialogue* from this Greek word. The disciples were going back and forth in their minds, not knowing what to think. The disciples were questioning; however, Jesus knew what they were thinking.

Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! (v. 39). Having addressed them with words, Jesus then asked them to look more closely at His resurrected body. The disciples likely had seen His wounds at the crucifixion (Luke 23:49); now they could see the results of those wounds. In English, it might be helpful to insert *and you will see* before *it is I myself* to get the full meaning. Verse 39 would then begin: *Look at my hands and my feet [and you will see], that it is I myself!* Rather than merely a spiritual presence, the resurrected Jesus had a recognizable physical body, although different in some ways since He could suddenly appear in their midst even though they were behind locked doors (John 20:19,26).

Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have (v. 39). Jesus continued addressing His disciples gathered there. Jesus issued two commands: (1) touch me and (2) see my body. Then Jesus provided His rationale for issuing these commands: a ghost does not have flesh and bones. The disciples’ physical senses of touching and seeing would confirm that Jesus was not a ghost; He really was a living person!

He showed them his hands and feet (v. 40). Jesus continued to convince them by showing them His hands and feet. They saw the nail marks from His crucifixion. John added that Jesus showed His disciples His side, pierced by a Roman soldier’s spear (John 19:34; 20:20). Although the Bible does not specifically mention it here, on the basis of Jesus’s commands to His disciples in Luke 24:39, likely Jesus walked around and let His disciples touch and see these wounds in His hands and feet (also see 1 John 1:1). Ignatius, a second-century church leader (martyred between AD 108-140), put it this way:

For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the Resurrection. And when he came to those with Peter he said to them: “Take, handle me and see that I am not a phantom without a body.” And they immediately touched him and believed, being mingled both with his flesh and spirit.¹

This early Christian leader wrote to the same church the apostle John did about Jesus’s resurrection (Rev. 2:8-11) and therefore provides evidence the early church was convinced of the historical reality of Jesus’s resurrection.

While they still were amazed and in disbelief because of their joy (v. 41). The disciples still were amazed and in disbelief; they could not believe their eyes. Luke provided an additional reason: because of *joy*. Seeing their Lord was “just too good to be true.” They were so happy they could hardly believe their eyes.

He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” (v. 41). Jesus wanted to convince His disciples He really was flesh and blood, so He asked them for something to eat. This would give them additional proof.

He took it and ate in their presence (v. 43). Jesus ate the broiled fish given to Him by the disciples (v. 42) to further convince them He was truly alive. Surely they watched in joy and amazement.

1. *Ignatius, To the Smyrnaeans 3:1-2, The Apostolic Fathers, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1912–1913), 255.*