

He Has Risen!

Luke 24:1-35

Key Verse: 24:6

“He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee....”

This passage tells us of the resurrection of Christ according to St. Luke. It is the longest of all resurrection accounts and includes events and details not covered by other gospel writers. Yet the main point is simple and clear: Christ has risen! He is living! Christ's resurrection is attested to by factual evidence, divine messages, the testimony of Scripture, and the changed lives of witnesses. The evidence is sufficient. Yet believing is not easy. We can learn in this passage how to believe the resurrection message. We need the Risen Christ's help to believe from our hearts. Then sorrows are turned to joy and despair gives way to hope. We become bold witnesses of the Risen Christ who can change the world. May the Risen Christ visit each of us personally and plant resurrection faith in our hearts today.

I. The resurrection message (1-12)

Jesus died the day before the Sabbath, late in the afternoon. His body must have been taken down and buried hurriedly, for the Jews needed to get indoors before sundown in order to keep the Sabbath. Some women had observed Jesus' death and burial. They were devoted followers who had come with Jesus from Galilee. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others (10). They had been together with Jesus for a long time. Luke introduced them at the beginning as those who helped support Jesus' ministry out of their own means (Lk 8:2). They loved Jesus who had first loved them. For example, Mary Magdalene had been possessed by seven demons. She was tormented, frustrated, angry, bitter and depressed, among other things. Nobody could handle her. No one wanted to be around her. But Jesus drove out the demons and set her free. She found peace and joy in Jesus. Like her, many women experienced Jesus' grace of healing and forgiveness. They had found their good shepherd in Jesus. They found the meaning of their lives in serving Jesus. They were willing to sacrifice for his work and were faithful to the end. At Jesus' arrest, the disciples had all scattered, but the women went to the cross with Jesus. They felt his pain, as though their own father or son were dying. When they watched him breathe his last, they felt that they had lost everything. Sorrow filled their hearts. Still, they were not slaves of emotions; they were holy women who rested on the Sabbath. They could overcome themselves to obey the word of God. Now they wanted to do something for Jesus. They wanted to honor him in death and to

He Has Risen!

express their love one last time. So they decided to anoint his body with spices. They went to the tomb as soon as possible, early on the first day of the week.

When they arrived at the tomb they found that the stone covering, which sealed the entrance, had been rolled away. They went in but they did not find the body of Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. The sudden appearance and holy aura of these beings reveals an angelic nature (23). They were, in fact, God's messengers. God sent them especially to these women with the good news of Christ's resurrection. Here we see that God has mercy on his people who are faithful in the midst of sorrow. Sensing the Lord's presence, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. Then the messengers spoke: **“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered in the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”** This message announces the resurrection. It is life to a dead world. It marked a new era for mankind. Let's consider the meaning of this message.

First, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” (5b)

The Lord did not begin his message with words of praise for the women's faithfulness. Rather, he chided them. Though their act of devotion was great, it was misdirected. It was not connected to the living Christ but to the dead body of Jesus. This needed to be changed. Christian service should be directed to Christ himself, who is living. Some people diligently do good deeds, but the goal of their service is to satisfy a moral code, fulfill a philosophy, serve an organization, or simply to make others happy. They may work hard, but they are limited to the realm of the perishing, and so are subject to sorrow. Inevitably they feel dead inside. The message tells us to go beyond our own activities. We need to listen to the resurrection message and to relate to the living Christ.

Second, “He is not here” (6a).

Jesus was not there. His body was not in the grave. Every other human being who died has left bodily remains. For most, it is possible to obtain DNA samples to identify them. But Jesus' body cannot be found anywhere on earth. We cannot examine Jesus' DNA, even though it would be most interesting to do so. It is because Jesus' tomb is empty. This is uniquely true of Jesus. All other influential religious leaders, philosophers and social reformers are in the grave. Mohammed's body is in the grave. The body of Socrates is in the grave, as is Confucius' body.

He Has Risen!

Buddha's body is in the grave, or in many graves. One temple in Thailand claims to have the remains of Buddha's toe in the center of its shrine. Other body parts may be in other shrines. But Jesus' body is not in the grave. As a further contrast, consider Jesus' apostles. They all died and were buried. Peter, John, Paul and others all have marked graves. Before the Reformation, the graves of Christian saints were sites of pilgrimage. Even the bodies of lesser known saints were eagerly sought out. But no one sought Jesus' body. No one is seeking Jesus' toe or finger. It is because his body is not here. Where is it?

Third, "...he has risen!" (6a)

This is the main point of the message. Jesus is not in the grave because he is no longer dead; he has risen! The Greek verb indicates that Jesus was a passive entity and that the action was performed by another. In fact, God raised Jesus from the dead (Ac 2:24a). Jesus died in obedience to God's will. Jesus' death was a once for all sacrifice for sin (Heb 9:28). God's justice was fully satisfied. Since the sin problem had been solved, death had no further claim on Jesus. Peter said, **"...it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him"** (Ac 2:24b). Until that time death had kept its hold on everyone who had died. Death was like an undefeated heavyweight wrestler. People's sins, judged by the law, gave the power of death a grip on their souls (1 Cor 15:56). Death had clenched this grip tightly and defeated everyone. But Jesus was different. Jesus was sinless and holy. So there was nothing for death to hold on to. The grip of death was broken by Jesus Christ. Moreover, Jesus is in very nature God. Death was no match for the Son of God. Jesus won the victory, disarming death's power.

Jesus' victory was an eternal victory for all who believe in him. As Paul said, **"Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor 15:57). Death has now lost its terror for those who believe in Jesus. Jesus and Paul both compare death to sleep (Jn 11:11; 1 Th 4:13). The Bible tells us that when a believer's body dies, his soul goes to be with the Lord. He enjoys sweet rest in paradise (Lk 23:43; 1 Th 4:14). Paul said this is far better than living in this world (Php 1:23). Those who go to be with the Lord remain with him until he returns to this world in power and great glory. Then, when he comes again, his people will come with him and take part in a final glorious resurrection (1 Th 4:14; Jn 5:28-29). At that time, everyone who has ever died will be raised again. Some will be raised to eternal life, others to eternal condemnation. At that time, there will be no death. Death will be shown to have been a temporary phenomenon in light of God's eternity. The saying will come true: **"Death has been swallowed up in victory"** (1 Cor 15:55). Christ's resurrection foreshadows God's complete victory

He Has Risen!

over death. Imagine a world with no death; that world is coming! Jesus' resurrection proves that God is the Almighty God. It foretells the restoration of God's reign over all creation. God's kingdom of peace and love and eternal life comes through the resurrection of Christ.

This is the best news. Satan has used the power of sin and the fear of death to rule over people (Heb 2:14). Our greatest sorrows and pains, our greatest heartaches and disappointments, are all rooted in the power of sin, death, and Satan. But these enemies have all been defeated by the Risen Christ. Christ gives this victory to all who believe in him. Thanks be to God!

Fourth, "remember how he told you..." (6b).

Though Christ had risen, it was not easy for the women to believe. Their experience and reason told them that death was the final, shameful, inescapable end. These women needed to overcome the tenacious hold of the power of death in their minds and hearts. To help them, the angels reminded them of Jesus' words. Look at verses 6b-7: **“Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”** On several occasions, first in Galilee, Jesus had foretold his suffering, death and resurrection in detail. Jesus' words were planted in the women's minds, even though they forgot for the time being. Jesus' words were not those of an ordinary man. Jesus' words had driven out demons, healed the sick, calmed storms, and even raised the dead! Jesus' words were always truthful. When the women remembered Jesus' words, faith came alive in their hearts. They believed that he had risen. Their sorrow turned to joy. They were eager to share the good news. Restored in spirit, they went to tell the disciples the good news.

Here we learn the importance of remembering Jesus' words. We can believe the resurrection based on his words. Without his words, our feeble minds entertain many futile thoughts and are ultimately under the power of death. Some Harvard University researchers recently revealed telling data. They indicate that on average, people spend half of their waking hours daydreaming. Their minds are focused on what they are doing only about half the time. Transitory human thoughts cannot be the basis for lasting truth. Romans 8:6 says, **“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace....”** Jesus' word has power to impart the truth of resurrection to our inner beings. Let's remember Jesus' words, and also remind others of Jesus' words in any circumstance or situation.

He Has Risen!

There is an interesting story about John Wesley. Before believing the Risen Christ from his heart, he was a preacher, and even a missionary from England to Georgia. His mission failed in spite of two years of intense effort. As he was sailing back across the Atlantic to England, he happened to travel with some Moravian missionaries. In the midst of a storm at sea, John Wesley became frightened to death. But the Moravians were joyfully singing songs of praise to God. Then Wesley realized that they had resurrection faith on the basis of God's words. He cried out for God's help and later received a word from Romans which transformed his life. As a young man, I really wanted to serve God. But fear, sorrows, guilt over past sins, and despair made me powerless. I spent much time sighing, regretting and daydreaming. But one Easter, as I studied the word of God, 1 Corinthians 15:4 came into my heart. It says: **“that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.”** I was convinced that Christ's resurrection set me free from sin and death. Christ brought me into relationship with Almighty God. These words were like spiritual dynamite that blasted away all the darkness from my heart. It was a turning point that enabled me to serve God boldly.

The women went back and told the disciples all the things that had happened. But they felt that Jesus' death was the end of it all. They were grieving over their own failures and their broken dreams. It is not easy to believe good news in such a condition. In addition, they might have thought that women were not credible witnesses. So they refused to believe the good news. In spite of the resurrection and clear testimony, they remained miserable and useless. Thankfully, the Risen Christ did not leave them alone.

II. The Risen Christ helps his disciples to believe (13-35)

Verses 13-35 give a most interesting account of how the Risen Christ helped two disciples to believe his resurrection. We can learn three things that help us to have, and to impart, resurrection faith.

First, the Risen Christ helped them to confess their despair (13-24).

These two men were leaving Jerusalem for Emmaus, a village about seven miles away. While the women had been faithful in the midst of sorrow, these men were unfaithful. They were escaping. Unbeknownst to them, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But he did not rebuke them. He understood them. He had come to guide them into the truth like a good shepherd.

He Has Risen!

Jesus' appearance was not extraordinary, but very ordinary. Jesus did not start lecturing them, but first listened to them. He urged them to speak up and share what was on their hearts. As they gave him their version of events, they revealed many important facts: Jesus' condemnation by the religious leaders, his crucifixion, and the significance of the third day. They had heard the women's testimony and that Jesus' tomb was empty. Yet they did not conclude that Jesus had risen. They thought everything was over, for they had lost their hope of an earthly kingdom when Jesus died. We need hope. Man cannot live without hope. But hopes rooted in this world lead us to broken-hearted despair which hinders faith in the resurrection. Jesus wants to give us a living hope in the kingdom of God. This hope will never disappoint us because it is rooted in what will never perish, spoil or fade away. We should trade in our small worldly hopes for the living hope in heaven. To do this, we need to confess the despair in our hearts. It is the first step to receiving help from the Risen Christ.

Second, the Risen Christ rebuked them and taught the Bible (25-29).

He began by saying, **"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"** Despair is not an intellectual problem; it is a heart problem. It made them slow to believe prophecy. They needed to repent. So Jesus rebuked them. It was like cardio shock treatments to restore their spiritual heartbeat. Jesus' rebuke gives life. Then Jesus taught the Scriptures to them in a special way. Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. There were many strands of Scripture which Jesus fulfilled through his life, death and resurrection. He is the seed of the woman who crushed Satan's head (Gen 3:15). He is the promised offspring of Abraham and David who establishes an eternal kingdom in peace and love (Gen 12:3; 1 Sa 7:12). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, as well as the great High Priest who offers it (Ex 12:3; Jn 1:29; Heb 4:14). He is the prophet like Moses (Dt 18:15; Ac 3:22). He is the suffering servant of Isaiah, the establisher of a new covenant foretold by Jeremiah, the good shepherd seen by Ezekiel, the Son of Man prophesied by Daniel (Isa 53; Jer 31:31-34; Eze 34:16; Da 7:12-13). Jesus tied together all the Scriptures which he fulfilled as the Messiah. It was the best Bible study ever! It was given, not to Peter and John, but to two runaway disciples. Their hearts began to burn with hope--hope in the true Messiah, living hope in the kingdom of God.

He Has Risen!

Third, the Risen Christ broke bread with them (28-32).

At their invitation, Jesus went in to stay with them. As he was at the table, he took bread, gave thanks and broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. Finally, Jesus communicated his love by feeding his disciples. This convinced them and they were changed. They got up and went back to Jerusalem to take up their mission as his disciples once again.

In this passage we have heard the message: **“Christ has risen according to the Scriptures.”** Christ’s resurrection gives us victory over death and all of its elements. It fills us with joy and living hope in the kingdom of God. It empowers us to get up and serve God according to his will for us. May this resurrection faith fill our hearts as we remember Jesus’ words. Then we can go from victory unto victory for the glory of God.