

What difference does Jesus' resurrection make in your life today?

Some questions carry more weight than others. One of the weightiest questions is this: What do you believe about Jesus' empty tomb? If Jesus really arose from the dead, we have to come to terms with all He said. Scripture is clear; Jesus is the resurrected Savior and Lord. Ultimately, the empty tomb gives us hope for the future—now and in eternity. If Jesus had not risen, none of us would have any hope at all.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In 23:50–24:12, Luke the historian walks us through the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish ruling council, had not agreed with the Sanhedrin's decision to seek Jesus' death. After Jesus' death, Joseph boldly approached the Roman governor for permission to take Jesus' body. Receiving permission, he and Nicodemus took Jesus' body to a tomb Joseph had prepared for himself (John 19:38-42). After a stone sealed the tomb's entrance, they walked away solemnly.

A group of women watched and took note of the location so they could return later. They prepared burial spices and then rested in observance of the Sabbath. The disciples were hidden behind closed doors. The city was quiet. The tomb was silent.

In chapter 24, the focus is on the empty tomb. As the women returned to the tomb, they found it empty. They were told by two angels that Jesus was raised and that they should spread the news. Luke made it clear that there was much astonishment and amazement at the resurrection of Christ. And rightly so. People live and die, but Jesus died and lived. Hearing this, Peter ran to the tomb and found it empty.

The resurrection has massive implications. Imagine what would have happened if Jesus didn't rise from the grave. If Christ had not risen to life, the women would have returned home. If Christ had not risen to life, Peter would have returned to his boat. But the empty tomb changed everything. Now there was no way to go back to their former lives in Galilee. The resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

LUKE 24:1-12

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the **spices**^A they had prepared. **2** They found the **stone rolled away**^B from the tomb. **3** They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. **5** So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground. “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. **6** “He is not here, but he has risen! Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, **7** saying, ‘It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and **rise on the third day**^C?’” **8** And they remembered his words. **9** Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things **to the Eleven and to all the rest**^D. **10** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other **women**^E with them were telling the apostles these things. **11** But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women. **12** Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. When he stooped to look in, he saw only the linen cloths. So he went away, amazed at what had happened.

Passage Outline

Return (Luke 24:1-5a)

Remember (Luke 24:5b-7)

Report (Luke 24:8-12)

Key Words

- A. The women used spices to anoint His body from the smell of decay.
- B. The round entrance stone sealed the tomb. The stone had been moved, not for Jesus to emerge but for the disciples to see the empty tomb.
- C. Jesus predicted His death by crucifixion and His resurrection in Luke 9:22; 18:32-33.
- D. They told the twelve (minus Judas Iscariot) plus the other believers. The rest may have included the 120 disciples of Acts 1:15.
- E. Women stood last at the cross and first at the tomb. Jesus had expelled seven demons from Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). We know little of Joanna; Mary was the mother of James the younger and Joses (Mark 15:40); the other women may have included Salome (Mark 15:40), Jesus’ aunt and the mother of James and John.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Having witnessed the terrifying crucifixion of Jesus, the women arrived at the tomb at *early dawn*. The dawn of the sun would provide them enough light to anoint the body of Jesus. They arrived with *the spices they had prepared* to complete the burial. This was the last step in the burial process.

How might we characterize the women's response to finding the grave empty?

How does their response compare to the way people react today about Jesus' tomb being empty?

Perplexed translates a term that describes intense anxiety. But there is more: not only were the women perplexed by who was not there, they were terrified by who was there. These were not mere men but two supernatural men. Their appearance attested to the divine nature of what was about to be explained.

How might people misunderstand or misdirect their worship today when confronted with the empty tomb?

The two men then declared the great truth: Jesus was not in the tomb but had risen. The passive form of the Greek word *risen* informed the women that God had brought this about. The two angelic beings who addressed the women were overjoyed in Jesus' triumph over death.

Why are we prone to forget God's promises? How does remembering God's promises give us understanding and hope?

The women moved from perplexity to terror to remembrance, and finally to reporting. The

women returned from the tomb and *told all these things to the eleven (minus Judas) and to all the rest of Jesus' closest followers.*

How does a person's confidence in the resurrection of Jesus translate into a passion for telling others?

Even though the women repeatedly attempted to tell the disciples and others the news, their words were considered an idle tale and the disciples were unwilling to believe them until Peter did his own investigation.

How does Peter's response compare with the way people today respond to the news of the empty tomb?

BIBLE SKILL: Connect Old Testament prophecy to New Testament fulfillment. Create two columns. In the first, list Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah: Isaiah 50:6; Isaiah 53:3-10; Psalm 16:9-10; Psalm 22; Psalm 49:15; Hosea 6:2; Zechariah 12:10. In the second, write some descriptions of the New Testament fulfillment in Jesus' death and resurrection. (See, for example, Matt. 26:67; Mark 15:19; Luke 18:31-33; Matt. 8:17; Matt. 26:63; John 19:9; Matt. 27:43; and Acts 2:29-32.) How does prophetic fulfillment impact your confidence in the gospel? In what ways could you use these passages to share the good news with someone?

APPLY THE TEXT

- All people must respond to the empty tomb of Jesus.
- Jesus arose just as He promised He would do.
- News of Jesus' resurrection should be shared with all people.

How do you respond to the empty tomb? Which person or group do you most identify with in Luke 24:1-12? How does the empty tomb impact your life today?

Discuss as a group practical ways for you to share the message of Jesus' resurrection. How can you work together as a team to share Jesus with others this week?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Jesus' resurrection changes everything.

Read Luke 24:1-3, contemplating what the women expected to find.

After they finished the last act of love for their friend—the women would have expected to return to their homes, the apostles would have returned to their fishing boats or other vocations. These women arrived prepared for one thing but ended up encountering something they were unprepared for, and it changed everything. Mark 16:3 tells us that as they headed toward the tomb, they asked “who will roll away the stone for us?” When they arrived however, *they found the stone rolled away*, and they *did not find the body*. The repeated usage of the words *found* and *find* in verses 2-3 emphasizes that this discovery was unexpected. Note that verse 3 uses the phrase *the body of the Lord Jesus*. This risen Jesus is the Lord. For the ancient Hebrews, the title Lord was a reference to Yahweh's authority. This title highlights how the resurrection affirmed Jesus' lordship and divinity.

How might you characterize the women's response to finding the grave empty? How does their response compare to the way you respond to Jesus' tomb being empty?

Day 2: The resurrection was a promise.

Read Luke 24:4-5a, considering how you would feel in the women's place.

Not only were the women perplexed, they were *frightened* by the two angelic men. The women's unexpected perplexity was replaced by unexpected terror. Their terror resulted in the action of bowing in great fear. This act of bowing could indicate respect for others of a superior status, but more likely they bowed as an act of worship (Gen. 19:1; Rev. 22:8). Angels, however, always refuse to accept worship which belongs only to God (Rev. 22:9). The women were perplexed and rattled. This is not how things work. When someone dies and is placed in the grave, that is it. But the resurrection of Christ was a reversal of how things were and a promise that things will not always be how they are now.

How might people misunderstand or misdirect their worship today when confronted with the empty tomb?

Day 3: Jesus foretold His death and resurrection.

Read Luke 24:5b-7, reflecting on the promises Jesus made.

The angels reminded the women of what Jesus said to them while he was still in Galilee. In Luke 9:22, Jesus said He would suffer at the hands of the religious leaders, be killed, and be raised on the third day. In Luke 18:32-33, Jesus spoke about a time when He would be handed over to Gentiles, be mocked, mistreated, and flogged before being killed and then rising on the third day. In other words, these events should not have surprised the women, for what had occurred was fulfillment of Jesus' own prophecy. These happenings were not only foretold by Jesus Himself, but were necessary (must) as part of God's plan. Why were these things that happened necessary? The only just way for God to declare sinful men and women righteous and bring them back into fellowship with Him was through the sacrificial death of His only Son. Jesus just didn't die for us; He died instead of us—in our place. He willingly took the payment for our sin, something He did not deserve. In addition, Jesus promised on the third day to rise, which served as God's seal of approval, the confirmation that Christ's work is finished was the resurrection. The resurrected Jesus stands as the Lord of all creation, our only hope of salvation.

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son. Christ was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion (John 20:26-28).

How does remembering God's promises give you understanding and hope?

Day 4: He is Alive!

Read Luke 24:8-10, underlining the word remembered.

Realizing Jesus had taught them about His crucifixion and resurrection, the women's attitudes changed. When He had spoken about His death, they didn't want to accept it. Now they grasped that He had died but also had risen from the dead. He was not in this place of the dead. He was alive! In ancient times, when giving an historical account based on eyewitness testimony, the names of persons functioned like footnotes. It was a way of saying "if you want to check out what I'm telling you, go talk to these people." The naming of the women (by which the report could have been fact checked) only adds to the credibility of the report. Or, at least in our minds, it should. But Luke indicates that the women not only told them but kept telling them. The verb form of told in verse 10 (coupled with "told" in v. 9) indicates that they tried repeatedly to get their story across to the apostles.

How does your confidence in the resurrection of Jesus translate into a passion for telling others?

Day 5: There is hope for us all through the resurrection.

Read Luke 24:11-12, noting Peter's actions.

Luke invites us to run behind Peter and see for ourselves. Peter hurriedly ran to the tomb. John accompanied Peter to see what had taken place. John actually outran Peter but stopped short of entering the tomb (John 20:3-6) Luke noted that Peter looked inside the tomb only to find *the linen cloths*. The presence of the linen dispels any initial theory that grave robbers removed His body. Linen had more value than a corpse. Peter's investigation left him amazed. For Peter, who had failed his Savior just three days prior, this was the birth of hope. If Jesus was alive, there was hope for Peter. There is hope for you and me as well. With a simple phrase, *he went home*, Luke captured the return trip back to the other disciples. Peter was *marveling at what had happened*. His mind was overwhelmed by this turn of events, and he could only marvel at the reality that Jesus was alive.

How does Peter's response compare with the way you responded to the news of the empty tomb?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Luke 24, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

What do the emotions expressed by the women tell us about their expectations?

Why was it important for the women to remember Jesus' words?

Discuss what holds you back from sharing about Jesus' resurrection.

