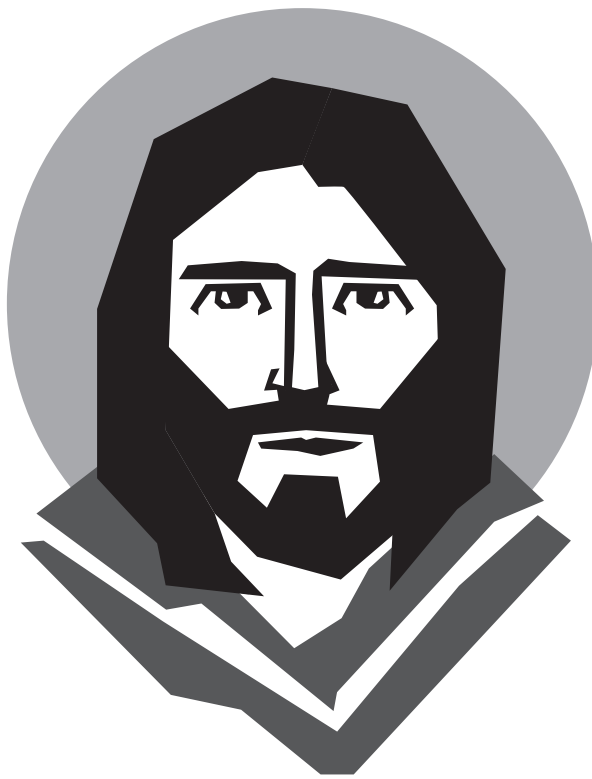


THE REAL JESUS



A study through the Gospel of Luke

BOOK 5: HIS RESURRECTION

THE REAL JESUS: HIS RESURRECTION

Week One | September 30, 2018 | Breaking News: The Tomb is Empty!

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's text, Luke 24:1–12. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

The Real Jesus is not dead; He is alive!

THEOLOGY APPLIED

The resurrection reveals that the barrier of separation between us and God has been removed. Instead of experiencing God's judgment when we come before God, we experience His love. We must constantly remember this truth.

MEDITATE

"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24:5b–6a).

GETTING STARTED

+ *Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.*

There once was a girl who, after years of study, finally got her first teaching job, which happened to be in Milan, Italy. As she toured her new school, she noticed that in nearly every room there was a picture or a sculpture of Jesus hanging on the cross. Now, she knew full well that Jesus wasn't still on the cross but had risen again, but she didn't think anything of all the images. After all, Jesus did hang on the cross and suffer greatly to pay the debt of sin. And they were just pictures hanging on the walls of the place she worked. No big deal.

Two years passed. Trials came. The girl began battling discouragement and the perpetual feeling of defeat. She realized she was no longer praying expectantly for God to do great things. Subconsciously, she had stopped believing her colleagues and friends could come to know The Real Jesus. She struggled to trust that God would indeed work all the trials she had experienced for her good and found herself doubting He really had a plan for her. Feeling all alone, she frequently cried, "God, where are you?"

One day, as she sat in her empty classroom reflecting on these things, she looked up and saw a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross. She saw a dead Jesus. It occurred to her that every day for the last two years she had seen images of only a dead Jesus. They were in every room she entered, and they were all the same. While she hadn't really paid attention to them, the pictures had affected her, slowly shaping her vision of Jesus. A Jesus who was weak and defeated, just like she was.

"But, He's alive," she feebly said to herself. Lifting her gaze, she exclaimed, "The Real Jesus is alive. My Jesus is alive!" The pictures that had been shaping her vision only told half of the story. Darkness could not hold Him back. It was no match for Him. On the third day, defeat gave way to victory and the Suffering Servant became the Conquering King. He stood up from death and vacated the tomb. Now, He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Nothing can stop His kingdom. Nothing can halt His redemption.

This is why it is so important to know not just any "Jesus," but The Real Jesus. Dead Jesus is not the real Jesus. It's only a half-truth. Jesus' final words are not "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" They are, "Thus it is written, the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins could be proclaimed in his name to all nations" (Luke 24:46b–47a). Our Savior is not stuck in a grave; He is on the move. Because of His victory, we can pray with faith, we can face discouragement with hope, and we can proclaim His truth with love. The Real Jesus is alive!

At the beginning of our study we learned that Luke wrote his gospel for a certain person, a man named Theophilus. We learned that Theophilus' name means, "lover of God," or "friend of God." He was a real person who sought God and desired to know the truth, but he had not yet met The Real Jesus. Luke's purpose in writing was to provide an orderly account that would clearly present who this Real Jesus is. Luke desired for Theophilus to move from being a "lover of God" to a "follower of Christ." This is a significant shift. Instead of being favorable to the idea of God or having an interest in spiritual things, Luke wanted Theophilus to experience the soul-satisfaction and life transformation that only come when you know and commune with The Real Jesus.

Luke has now come to the point in his account that he has been building up to all this time, the main point he wants to communicate to Theophilus—The Real Jesus is alive. Because He is alive, everything He said about Himself is true (John 3:16–17). Even better than that, because He is alive, all the promises God made through the entire Bible

are true (2 Corinthians 1:20). Because He is alive, He has won the battle over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:55). Because He is alive, Theophilus can have life, and so can you (Romans 6:8).

🔗: *Reflect on the way you see the world, the way you pray, and the emotions you feel as you go through your daily life. Do they indicate that the Jesus you know and worship is a fake Jesus or The Real Jesus?*

🔗: *Complete this sentence applying this biblical truth to your own life: "Because Jesus is alive, I _____."*

📊 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Today's text reads a lot like a breaking news story written by an investigative journalist. Luke puts forth the facts of the scene alongside the witnesses' report to help us understand what really happened. Everything we believe pivots on this one event, so he aims to give us an orderly and reliable account.

1. WHAT THEY (DIDN'T) SEE

2. WHAT THEY HEAR

3. THE WITNESSES' REPORT

GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.*

WHAT THEY (DIDN'T) SEE

📊 LUKE 24:1-5A

🔗: *Look back at Luke 23:55-56 to remember the context of this passage. Who are "they?"*

Q: *Why did they come back to the tomb?*

When there is breaking news, broadcasters interrupt regular programming and go live to bring important information. The news is often dramatic and shocking, but journalists usually can't give much information because they are still in the process of gathering details. They keep you informed as the story unfolds. As soon as they can, they interview eyewitnesses who give first-hand detail and fill in gaps in the story. When the investigative work is finished, they are able to present a complete report about what happened.

Think about that process when you read this chapter. In verses 1–3, we learn of an early report that the stone has been rolled away and Jesus' body is gone! As the chapter unfolds, the story becomes clearer and we start to understand the significance of what happened.

Dr. Luke gives us plenty of detail as he describes what happened. “On the first day of the week, at early dawn” (verse 1), the women went to the tomb. They brought spices that were used for burial. This tells us they expected to find a dead body. They had no hope for anything else. They were just trying to cope with reality. The women probably had prepared themselves to be reminded once again of the horrendous death that had taken place and the torture their Lord had experienced. When you visit the burial site of a loved one, the last thing you expect to see is an empty grave! And if you did, the first explanation that come to your mind wouldn't be that your loved one had come back to life, dug out of the grave, and walked away! Imagine the women's distress. They had already seen so much evil done to Jesus as He was crucified. Who would disturb his dead body too?

In just the first few verses, we have strong evidence Luke is telling the truth about what happened. Who were the first people to learn about the resurrection of Jesus? A group of women. If you were to create “fake news” in the first century, you would never have women be the first testimonies of the event. Christian philosopher and apologist, William Lane Craig, explains,

“Certainly these women were friends of Jesus. But when you understand the role of women in first-century Jewish society, what's really extraordinary is that this empty tomb story should feature women as the discoverers of the empty tomb in the first place. Women were on a very low rung of the social ladder in first-century Palestine ... Women's testimony was regarded as so worthless that they weren't even allowed to serve as legal witnesses in a Jewish court of law. In light of this, it's absolutely remarkable that the chief witnesses to the empty tomb are these women who were friends of Jesus. Any later legendary account would have certainly portrayed male disciples as discovering the tomb ... This shows that the Gospel writers faithfully recorded what happened ...”

Once again, we can be sure that Luke gives us a reliable account. He doesn't change the facts to best fit the culture at the time. He reports the facts as they are.

The text says the women were “perplexed” (verse 4a). Another translation says they were “thrown into confusion.”

This is exactly what needs to happen to become a follower of Christ. Everything you previously thought about religion, God, happiness, or salvation need to be thrown into utter confusion in order for you to see the truth. When you meet The Real Jesus, even your previous ideas about who Jesus is will be called into question. Your old life must experience crisis before it can experience redemption.

Not only did the women not see what they expected—Jesus’ body—in verse 4 they saw something they didn’t expect to see. Instead of Jesus’ corpse in the tomb, there were two men. Luke describes them as being dressed in dazzling apparel. Again, Dr. Luke sticks to the facts and writes with restraint like a good historian. He simply states how these men looked to the women, who had no idea who they were. It isn’t until verse 23 that he tells us directly that they were angels. But, even without fully understanding who these men were, the women “were terrified and bowed down to the ground” (verse 5). The men radiated heavenly splendor, and the women had to turn their faces to the ground because it was so intense. If no one can stand in the glory and splendor of an angel, imagine what it will be like to stand in the presence of God.

But this is something else that is made possible by the resurrection. Because Jesus is the perfect and victorious mediator between us and God, God’s splendor and holiness will not come down upon us as judgment, but as love! In 2 Corinthians 3:12–18, Paul explains that Moses had to put a veil over his face when he went up the mountain to meet with God. This veil protected him and Israel from fully experiencing God’s glory, because it would destroy them. But, as Kent Hughes explains, “The veil not only preserves Israel from being destroyed; it also keeps her from being transformed.” It kept them from being annihilated by God’s righteousness, but it also kept them from being made righteous from the inside out.

Because of the resurrection, Jesus gives us access to God’s presence without fear. Or, says Paul, “Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses ...” (verse 12). The hope we have in Christ allows us to come confidently before the throne of God. Now, God’s glory doesn’t destroy us, it transforms us. It makes us look more like Him! Paul says in verse 18, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” What an unimaginable gift! And all of this is made possible because of an empty tomb.

Q: *Since women were considered second-class citizens in that society, why do you think Jesus would allow women to be the first witnesses to His resurrection? How does it challenge how the society viewed women? What does this say about who women are in His sight? Can you think of other interactions Jesus had with women that communicated the same message?*

Q: *How has the cross and resurrection thrown your old life into confusion or crisis and given you a new life?*

Q: *Have you thought about the fact that God’s complete work of salvation doesn’t*

just save you from His judgment, but transforms your entire being into His image? Do others see you as someone who isn't just spared from hell, but also transformed into someone new?

WHAT THEY HEAR

❑ LUKE 24:5B-7

Q: *What question did the angels ask the women? What do you think it means?*

Q: *Why do you think they encouraged the women to remember what He told them?*

The women stood in an empty tomb. The body they expected to find wasn't there, and in its place were two angels. In this moment of confusion—or crisis—the women were asked an important question: “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” This was not a riddle. It wasn't a trick. It was the most important question they needed to wrestle with, and it is the most important question we have to wrestle with as well.

Ask yourself this hypothetical question: Would your life be any different if The Real Jesus were, in fact, still dead? If He were still in the tomb, you could still think of Him as a good teacher, or even a sort of guardian angel. You could still come to church on Sunday and seek to follow His example in the way you live. You could even hold certain ethical positions and agree with Christian values. You could faithfully read and study the Bible. You could even love “dead” Jesus in the same way you love a deceased friend or family member. What is the difference between a life that venerates “dead” Jesus and one that follows a living Savior? Sinclair Ferguson says this is the difference between moralism and true Christian faith. If Jesus is still dead, He would be small enough to fit into your life quite nicely. But if He is alive, He is Lord of your life.

In verses 6–7, the angels prompt the women to remember what they already know, to remember what they have already been taught. “Remember how he told you,” they said. The resurrection proves that everything Jesus said about Himself is true! The Real Jesus is more than a prophet, a good teacher, a miracle-worker, or a kind-hearted man who died a tragic death. He is the Son of God. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is Lord. Every word He speaks is true.

Jesus told them throughout His ministry that He came ultimately to suffer, die, and rise again. As we studied earlier, He was born to die and be raised again. He lived His entire life from this perspective. If the women had truly heard, trusted, and kept these words at the forefront of their minds, the three days Jesus was in the grave would not have

been days for mourning, but days of anticipation! But they forgot what Jesus had told them. They forgot the gospel.

The Christian life is all about remembering the gospel. We remind ourselves, we are reminded by others, and we remind others of everything Jesus has told us. Theologian Michael Bird calls this “gospelizing.” He explains the idea this way: “[We] should think of the church as ‘the community of the gospelized!’ When you magnetize a piece of metal, the metal becomes magnetic. When you sterilize a surgical tool, the tool becomes sterile. When you tenderize a piece of meat, the meat becomes tender. When a person or a church is gospelized, they ooze gospel, they bleed Jesus, they overflow with Spirit, they radiate the Father’s glory. That is the goal of the gospelized community.”

Living the Christian life is not about inventing something new, but about letting truth sink deeper and deeper into our souls so every part of our lives becomes transformed by it. It is about constantly prompting ourselves and one another to remember everything Jesus has told us, just like the angels did for the women.

Q: *Have you built your life on a dead Savior or a living one?*

Q: *How does keeping yourself focused on the gospel allow you to have genuine joy and hope, even in the face of death?*

THE WITNESSES’ REPORT

■ LUKE 24:8–12

Q: *What effect did the angel’s “prompt” have on the women?*

Q: *How did the disciples receive the women’s testimony?*

In verse 8, we read that the angel’s prompt worked. The women remembered what Jesus had told them! Then, the picture became clear for them. They recognized what was going on and their confusion gave way to clarity. Tragic news became wonderful news!

News spreads, naturally. The women immediately went back to find the disciples and tell them this breaking story. Notice that hearing the good news immediately led to proclaiming it. There was no time in between. It was an instant transition because it is a natural one.

Who were these women? In verse 10, we learn a few of their names—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. We have seen their names before in Luke 8:2. They were among the women who supported Jesus’ ministry financially and even traveled with Him and His disciples. Once again we see the way Jesus’ ministry included women in a way that was completely counter-cultural. These were not weak women, but devoted followers of Jesus who sat under His teaching, supported His ministry, and remained by His side even after His death. They were at His graveside when no one else was.

But the disciples did not believe them (verse 11). They slipped back into their culture’s attitude concerning the testimony of women—untrustworthy and meaningless. They did not take the women seriously. As a result, they almost missed out on the greatest news ever.

Including this part of the story is further proof Luke is telling the truth. If you were going to make up fake news and wanted it to be credible for a first-century audience, you wouldn’t have women be the main witness and you certainly wouldn’t report that Jesus’ own disciples didn’t believe them at first. Even if Luke wanted to make the truth more “believable,” he would have skipped over the part about the women and started the account with the men discovering Jesus was alive. But he didn’t. He gave us a truthful and orderly account. He told the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

But in verse 12, we learn Peter was at least intrigued by the women’s report. He ran to the tomb to verify what they’d said. Think about what Peter was likely going through. Just days before, Jesus had told him that he would deny Jesus three times. Peter scoffed at the idea, only to find himself denying his Lord at His darkest hour. The look Jesus gave him after the rooster crowed (Luke 22:61), was the last time Peter had seen Him. The last words Jesus heard from Peter were words of denial. Surely, Peter had been plagued with guilt, remorse, and despair over the last three days. He too had forgotten what Jesus had told him. He thought the story was over. His Jesus was a dead Jesus. Maybe the testimony of the women prompted his memory. Maybe it sparked a glimmer of hope in his heart. We don’t know for sure, but the text says he ran to the tomb.

What did Peter see? An empty tomb. All the details of the story have yet to come in, but the breaking news is glorious.

Q: *How can brothers and sisters in Christ encourage one another to remember the gospel?*

Q: *In what ways do you identify with Peter?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- ♀: *What are specific ways you "remember what He told you?" How do you remind yourself of the gospel? How do you remind others of it? Is this something you practice on a daily basis or something you outsource for Sundays?*
- ♀: *How does the account of these women help shape your vision of what it means to be a godly woman? These women were counter-cultural in their day. In what ways are they counter-cultural in our day as well?*
- ♀: *Luke tells us of Jesus' life, His death, and His resurrection. Each is essential for the gospel. Which part do you tend to "forget?" What impact does "forgetting" have on your life? How can you practice "remembering" this week?*

PRAY

+ *Use this prayer point to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Jesus, thank You that You are alive! Thank You that death is not the last word. Thank You that shame, condemnation, and judgment are not the end of my story. Thank You for making it possible to stand before God with an unveiled face and be transformed from the inside out. Help me remember all You have said.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 24:1 The first day of the week is Sunday. This is why most Christian churches gather for worship on Sundays.

LUKE 24:7 The word “must” emphasizes that redemption could happen no other way. Jesus had to atone for sin in order to secure God’s forgiveness. The cross is the site where God’s perfect justice and His unbound mercy meet. They are not at odds with each other.

LUKE 24:10 The language implies that at least five women went to the tomb.

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, Christ Centered Exposition (Luke), Preaching the Word (Luke), and The Case for Easter by William Lane Craig.*