

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 24 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish up the Gospel of Luke. As we finished up last week we ended on a dark note, the crucifixion of Jesus and His burial in the garden tomb. Now, as dark and hopeless as that day was, we must not lose sight that Sunday is coming!

Before we get to our text this evening, let me share these words with you and as you will see, it gives to us a summary of what Jesus has done, rising from the dead. We are told,

The greatest miracle of all history was about to take place. No human being had ever returned to this world with a brand-new eternal body that was impervious to disease and the ravages of time. But Jesus Christ, the God-Man would arise out of the dark realm of death. He would make appearances to His followers and display to the world the miracle of miracles! Because of the resurrection, many doubters would simply argue that He had not died but was only in an unconscious state. Others would argue that His resurrection is simply a fabricated story created by the apostles. Others believed that Jesus had a spiritlike body that was not truly flesh and blood. But the resurrection story, with all of its many evidences, stands as the corner stone of truth encompassing both the Old and New Testaments!

- Mal Couch, The Gospel of Luke – Christ, the Son of Man, p. 227

The resurrection is important as we will see this evening. And so, with that as our background, as Jesus has been in the tomb for three days now, we will pick up our study this evening early on that Sunday morning, in Luke chapter 24 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this as we study His Word.

LUKE 24**VERSES 1-3**

First of all, the first day of the week was Sunday. And this is the day that the Lord rose from the grave. And, this is also the day that the church would gather together to worship the Lord, the first day of the week.

One writer put it like this, “This became the day of Christian worship (cf. Acts 20:7). The change from the traditional and biblical Sabbath is in itself a strong evidence of the Resurrection because it shows the strength of the disciples’ conviction about what happened on that day.” (Liefeld)

Next, who are these women that came to the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed? Luke does not tell us until we get to verse 10, but most likely these are the women who saw Jesus put in the tomb, the women from Galilee. We are told in Luke 23:55-56, “**And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.**”

And the other Gospels also tell us who these women were. There was Mary Magdalene who is mentioned in Mark 16:9 and John 20:11-18. There is Mary, the Mother of James mentioned in Matthew, Luke and in Mark she is called “the other Mary.” There is Salome mentioned in Mark 15:40 and Mark 16:1. And Joanna mentioned in Luke 24:10. And there were other women who came with them according to Luke 24:10.

Why did they go to the tomb with spices, didn’t Joseph and Nicodemus wrap Jesus with cloth and spices? Yes, but it was done quickly and they were coming to finish the work!

Now, for these women, one of the problems was the stone that covered the tomb where Jesus was placed. It weighed upwards of one ton and thus, they could not move it. Also, the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb. But when they arrived the soldiers were gone and the tomb was open, the stone was rolled away.

Was the stone rolled away to let Jesus out? Of course not. We see in His resurrected body that he could pass through material barriers. Then why was the stone rolled away? To let these women in so they could see that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Notice what we are told in verse 3, **“Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”** And you can imagine what they were thinking, someone stole the body of Jesus! Listen what happens next as we read on.

VERSES 4-8

I love this. As these women were wondering what happened, two angels appeared before them and these angels seem astonished that these women are confused about this situation. But how could they have known? Because Jesus spoke of what was to take place.

In Luke 9:22 we are told, **“... ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.’”** Now this has come to pass, Jesus was put to death and He is risen!

If you go to Israel today you most likely will stop at the garden tomb, the place where the body of Jesus was placed, next to Golgotha or Calvary. And outside this tomb is a sign that says, ***“He is not here, He is risen!”*** I like that, but you know what, everyone that enters that tomb looks to see. I don’t know what they expect to find, because He is not there but He is risen!

Now what I love here is that the Lord speaks to us and helps us to understand the concerns we have, the questions we have. We just need to listen to His voice, be in His Word.

Yes, here He used angels to let these women know that He is risen!

Also, as we read this it is easy to come down upon these women and really the apostles for their lack of faith, for not trusting God's Word, not believing that what God said would come to pass. But we often do the very same thing.

God has spoken to us through His Word and we sit there in unbelief, we doubt God, we don't trust His Word that He is faithful! If you are having trouble believing God regarding a situation you are involved in this evening, fall back on what you know of God, what He has done in your life in the past, to help you in the present situation you are in. Be like these women and **REMEMBER!** Remember what God's Word has said!

Now that these women are told that He is risen, what are they going to do? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 9-11

As these women come and tell the good news to these men, I want you to notice the faith of these men; they refused to believe thinking the women were just hysterical! In fact, those words, "**idle tales**" was a medical term that was used to describe the babbling of a fevered and insane man.

Keep in mind that "In the first century the testimony of women was not deemed authoritative. Luke's inclusion of the incident serves to emphasize his high regard for women."

(Pate)

So, they thought the women had lost their minds, overwhelmed by all that had transpired. You see, they all had placed their hope in Jesus and now that He is dead, all their hope was dashed upon the rocks. They had no more hope and thus, they were unwilling to believe. They didn't want to be open because they didn't want to get hurt again!

You see, "The disciples were not men poised on the brink of belief and needing only the shadow of an excuse before launching forth into a proclamation of resurrection. They were utterly skeptical." (Morris)

But for a couple of these men, curiosity got the better of them and listen to what they do.

VERSE 12

In John 20:3-10 we are given a little more insight to what took place. We are told, "**Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.**"

So, as they both ran to the tomb, John beat Peter and John looked in and "**saw**" these things, BLEPEI in the Greek, and it speaks of seeing visibly, looking in.

Then Peter ran in and he "**saw**" these things, THEORAI is the Greek word and it speaks of studying carefully, it is the word we get our English word, "theory" from.

Then John entered the tomb and he “saw” these things, IDEIN in the Greek and it basically means “I get it.” It is the word we get our English word “idea” from. John believed something took place, he believed, maybe not to the extent he did when he saw the risen Lord, but he still believed!

And as Peter looked in and saw the grave clothes like an empty cocoon, just lying there, he was not able to put it all together yet.

VERSES 13-16

Keep in mind that it is now Sunday afternoon and two disciples of Jesus leave Jerusalem heading for home, to Emmaus, about seven miles away. Now this may mean seven miles’ round trip as Pate tells us, “There is considerable uncertainty about the original location of the village of Emmaus. Luke mentions that it was about seven miles (literally, ‘sixty stadia’) from Jerusalem. If he meant round-trip, the reference would fit rather nicely with a town Josephus identified as Emmaus, which he located thirty stadia from Jerusalem.” (Pate)

Now as they are traveling they are discussing the events that have transpired; the death of their Lord, the one they placed all their hope in. And they are broken, hopeless and here comes Jesus alongside of them and begins to walk with them but they don’t recognize Him, why?

Because the eyes of unbelief can’t see Jesus. We still see that today even among Christians who block Jesus out because of the situation they find themselves in. Be careful, God is still on the throne and He is still in control!

It is as Paul said in Romans 4:20-22 in regard to the faith of Abraham. He said, **“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’”**

And as we read on we will see Jesus trying to draw out their faith.

VERSES 17-24

Now we assume that these are two men traveling on the road to Emmaus, and that may not be the case. We know that one of them was a man and his name was Cleopas. And in John 19:25 we are told, **“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas [or Cleophas], and Mary Magdalene.”** It is very possible that these two were husband and wife and they are traveling home from Jerusalem!

And I believe what we see here is that Jesus is drawing their faith out, dealing with those issues that are preventing them to believe and He does the same with us. Look at how hopeless they are at this point. Everything they placed their hope in has been taken away as Jesus was put to death. They left Jerusalem dejected and hopeless and they can’t believe that this person who was walking with them knew nothing about all that had happened a few days earlier!

But, of course Jesus knew, it was Him they were speaking of. But once again Jesus is drawing out their faith, allowing them to express their feelings with the ultimate goal of having their faith grow, that they would believe!

Now look at what they knew about Jesus. They knew Jesus was a prophet of God who was mighty in deed – He raised the dead, He caused the lamb to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the mute to speak, and He freed those who were demon possessed, and-so-on.

He was mighty in word - the people were amazed because when He spoke He did so with authority.

Now, don't lose sight that the same power is available to us today and so is the power of His Word, do you believe?

Paul put it this way in Hebrews 4:12-13, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”**

But here we see this couple downcast, hopeless, in despair. You see, they were looking for Jesus to establish the Kingdom Age where righteousness will reign, but that is not going to happen as their Messiah was put to death and now it has been three days.

You can imagine how they were feeling, the hopelessness of their situation. They thought Jesus was the one, but now, as they look at the events that had transpired they felt they were wrong! Why were they like this? Because they did not believe the power of God and His Word!

And here is the amazing thing. They heard the report from the women, and yes, the tomb was empty like they said. But because they couldn't see Him they refused to believe.

How about you? Can you believe without seeing with your own eyes? The evidence is overwhelming, Jesus is the Messiah and He did rise from the dead, the tomb is empty! It is as Jesus said to Thomas when he doubted in the resurrection of Jesus, **“... ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”** John 20:29.

Now some may say, “What proof of the resurrection do you have?” Let me explain it like this, because there is much proof that Jesus rose from the grave. And if you reject it, I think I can safely say that even if Jesus appeared before you today, you would still reject Him!

Simon Greenleaf was the famous Professor of Law at Harvard University. And in 1842 he produced a famous work entitled, “A Treatise on the Law of Evidence” which “is still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure.”

Back in 1846, while Greenleaf was still professor of Law at Harvard, he wrote a volume entitled, “An Examination of the Testimony of the four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice.” In this classic work, Greenleaf examines the value of the testimony of the apostles to the resurrection of Christ. The following are this brilliant jurist’s critical observations. He wrote,

The great truths which the apostles declared, were, that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling errors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men of the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them.

Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revelings [to feast in a noisy manner], bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblenching [not blenching or turning aside; unflinching] courage.

They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.

If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was known to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come.

Such conduct in the apostles would moreover have been utterly irreconcilable with the fact, that they possessed the ordinary constitution of our common nature. Yet their lives do show them to have been men like all others of our race; swayed by the same motives, animated by the same hopes, affected by the same joys, subdued by the same sorrows, agitated by the same fears, and subject to the same passions, temptations, and infirmities, as ourselves. If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.

- Simon Greenleaf, An Examination of the Testimony of the four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice

You see, it would make no sense for these men to die for a lie that they knew was a lie. One of them would have said, "Just kidding!" But they all died martyr's death except for the apostle John.

Also keep in mind that Dr. Simon Greenleaf was a very verbal skeptic of Christianity. And one day he was challenged by his students to apply these books he wrote, "The Laws Of Legal Evidence" to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He accepted the challenge, and in the process, he became a Christian. His conclusion was as follows. "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best established events of history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice."

In other words, you can place Jesus on trial and try to prove that He did not rise from the dead, but according to the evidence we have before us, He will win the case. He rose from the dead! The tomb is empty!

So the resurrection of Jesus is the evidence that He is God, that He has conquered death and because He rose from the dead so shall we! It is not that people can't believe, it is just that they chose not to believe!

Listen to how Jesus responds to their hopelessness, their doubting that He is risen. And keep in mind they still don't know that this is Jesus!

VERSES 25-27

Now why in the world did Jesus say to them, "**O foolish ones . . .**"? Why did He rebuke them? Because they did not believe the Word of God even though they knew the Word of God! The Messiah was to suffer according to the Scriptures. Let me show you what I mean.

In Isaiah 53:5-7 we are told, "**He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.**"

In Isaiah 50:5-6 we are told, "**The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.**"

In Daniel 9:26 we are told, "**And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.**" It is speaking of the Messiah being executed for a capital crime!

In Zechariah 12:10 we are told, "**And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.**"

And in Psalm 22 we are told of what He endured, and there are more, but you get the idea. And keep in mind that Psalm 22 gives us a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross some 1,000 years before this took place. And this Psalm tells us, **“But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, ‘He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’ . . . I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.”**

Psalm 22:6-8, 14-18.

And then Jesus takes them through the Word of God; He gives them a Bible study showing them from Genesis through Malachi how Jesus fulfilled all that was spoken of Him, that He is the Messiah! What a Bible study that must have been. It is as Psalm 40:7 says of Jesus and how the Bible testifies of Him, **“ . . . ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the Book it is written of me.’”** It is all about Him, all about Jesus!

One writer put it like this, “The Savior, who knows the Word of God perfectly, because of His intimate union with the Spirit who is its Primary Author, expounded to them in broad outline all the Scriptures that referred to Him, from the first books of the Old Testament and right through to the end.” (Geldenhuys)

And Morris wrote, “We should not understand this as the selection of a number of proof-texts, but rather as showing that throughout the Old Testament a consistent divine purpose is worked out, a purpose that in the end meant and must mean the cross.”

Notice what happens as they draw near their home.

VERSES 28-32

Notice that as they came to their home, this man who was with them, Jesus, even though they did not recognize Him as yet, seemed to act if He was going to just go on, but it says, “**they constrained Him.**” Spurgeon makes these remarks in regard to this word, “constrained.” He wrote, “It is a very strong word that, ‘they constrained him’; it is akin to the one which Jesus used when he said, ‘The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.’ They not only invited him, but they held him, they grasped his hand, they tugged at his skirts, they said he should not go.”

So, Jesus goes with them and as they prepare to eat, when Jesus broke the bread and blessed the food that they were going to eat, their eyes were opened and they recognized it was Jesus!

What opened their eyes to this being Jesus? I believe it was when Jesus broke the bread and gave thanks that they saw the nail prints in His wrists and they believed; their eyes were opened!

It is as Zechariah 12:10 says, “**And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.**”

Yes, this is speaking of the nation of Israel as a whole turning to Jesus. The point I want you to see is they will look on Jesus whom they pierced; Jesus still bears the marks of the crucifixion and I believe this is what opened their eyes that this man was Jesus, He is risen!

And I like this. As Jesus spoke with them on the road to Emmaus their hearts burned inside them but they still refused to see until they saw the nail prints and their eyes were opened.

What is causing you this evening not to see Jesus? You need to surrender to Him, to His will, to His love, and you will see Him!

Now that the work was done, as their faith grew, we see that Jesus left so they could put into practice what they learned. And that is exactly what we see taking place here in the next few verses and that is what we as Christians need to do, put into practice what God has shown us.

VERSES 33-35

Now was Emmaus seven miles from Jerusalem or just three and one-half miles away? In either case, they are moving faster now, why? Because when you have seen the risen Lord, when you have received the good news of the Gospel, you can't help but be excited and you want to share it with others. And that is exactly what we see them doing.

So, they go to the eleven apostles and tell them, "**The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!**" Now, first of all Thomas was not there and this is speaking of the apostles, the group just like the twelve referred to all of them but they might not have been all together at that time. And when they speak of Simon here I believe they are speaking of Peter, for we are told in I Corinthians 15:5 about those who witnessed the risen Lord, "**and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.**"

Okay, they rejected the testimony of the women, they were women and women are emotional. Thus, they must have received this good news from Cleopas, he was a man, right? Not exactly, they did not believe! Mark tells us “**And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.**” Mark 16:13. They still refused to believe even though Cleopas, a man told them and they keep getting reports that He is risen!

But the Lord is going to get their attention very quickly. Look what happens next.

VERSES 36-43

It is now Sunday evening and Jesus appears to His men and remember, Thomas is absent. Can you imagine what was going through their minds when Jesus appeared to them?

The doors were locked and all of a sudden there is Jesus and their response is funny, “**But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.**”

In other words, they thought they saw a ghost. Was it a friendly ghost? Just kidding but keep in mind they couldn't call Ghostbusters but that is what they must have been thinking because Jesus tells them to touch Him, that He is flesh and bones and He eats with them, He was not a ghost.

He was in His glorified body now and His words of peace carry a new meaning now. You see, we can have peace ***WITH*** God through Jesus Christ and we then can experience the peace ***OF*** God in our lives!

Now I think those men wanted to believe but their faith was weak. Thus, Jesus appears to them to help their faith to grow and I believe Jesus will show Himself even today to those whose hearts are hungry to know Him, not in the physical sense, but through His Word! It is as the Lord said in Jeremiah 29:13, “**And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.**”

In John 20:22 we see something else that takes place, they are born again. We are told, “**And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’**” Now some like to say that it was not until the day of Pentecost that the Spirit was poured out and they were New Testament believers, but when Jesus breathes on you and tells you to receive the Holy Spirit, something is going to happen! And it did, they were born again!

VERSES 44-48

Keep in mind that before He taught them from the Scriptures, He breathed on them and they became New Testament believers, they were born again as I have said. It is then that the Scriptures were opened up to them by the Holy Spirit as Jesus spoke of the things that needed to happen and did happen to the Messiah, to Jesus.

The point is this. You can't just read the Bible using your intellect because the natural man can't know the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned according I Corinthians 2:10-16, which says, **“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”**

When you read the Word of God, when you study the Word of God, ask the Holy Spirit to open it up to your heart and mind so you can draw out those things that God has for you!

And notice what Jesus is showing them from the Scriptures, the Old Testament. First of all, why was it necessary for Christ to suffer, to die and to rise the third day?

Because it was the fulfillment of what the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of the Messiah and the Old Testament sacrifices could never take away your sins, but through the blood of Jesus our sins can be cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more (Psalm 103:12, Jeremiah 31:34b).

It is as Isaiah tells us, **“Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword’; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”** Isaiah 1:18-20.

Why did He rise from the dead? Because just as He conquered death, so too will we as we receive Jesus into our lives. You see, to be absent from these physical bodies, physical death, means we are present with the Lord and thus, we can have that abundant life, that everlasting life that is only found in Him!

And keep in mind that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God! It is what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:50-57, **“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The sting of death has been removed by Jesus and because He rose from the grave so too will we as we receive our new bodies, eternal bodies! Our victory is in Jesus, never forget that. He is the Firstfruits of those who will rise from the dead!

Now they have this message of the Gospel, of the forgiveness of sins that is found in Jesus, and they are to go out and be witnesses of these things. But before they could do that they needed one thing in their lives and Jesus speaks of that in the next verse.

VERSE 49

Now this is an important question and many miss the point of this. What is the promise of the Father? Now people have all kinds of crazy ideas about what this promise from the Father is all about, but why guess, just let the Scriptures speak for themselves.

In the book of Acts, which is a continuation of the Gospel According to Luke, we are told in chapter 1, “**And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ . . . But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**” Acts 1:4-5, 8.

You see, they had all the tools, they were saved, but they were lacking the power to run those tools and that is the empowering of the Holy Spirit in their lives or the Holy Spirit coming upon them. The Holy Spirit was *IN* them, salvation, but not yet *UPON* them, empowerment!

And in Acts chapter 2 we see this empowering for service and Peter comes forth and speaks boldly the things of God and 3,000 people get saved!

Now some argue that this is not for us today, it was for the early church but it is no longer needed. I disagree with a that. We still need the power of God’s Spirit upon our lives!

Let me show you what I mean. I have some power tools at home and they are great. But, imagine if I got out my drill and didn't plug it in, I had no power to run it.

I could still probably use it, but it would be very hard, very frustrating and the fruit of my labor would be very small.

On the other hand, if I plugged in that drill and used the power to run it, how much easier and more fruitful it would be.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. Ask God to empower you for service that you may be a witness of Jesus Christ, not in the power of the flesh, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is as the Lord said in Zechariah 4:6, “**... ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.**” You see, Jesus is continuing His ministry through us, through His followers!

Now, like I have said, some still like to argue that the gifts were only for the early church, but listen to what Peter said regarding this promise of the Father in Acts 2:39, “**For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.**” Who is this *baptism unto power* for? It was for them, it was for their children, and it is for all who are afar off, it is for all who ask, this empowerment for service, this *baptism unto power!* I hope that clears that up for you.

Now besides those that try to deny this *baptism unto power*, there are those in the church today who have developed some strange ideas to what this power is all about. And because of that you see all kinds of strange and weird behavior that has been attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon a person's life.

Understand this; the power that is spoken of is working in us so that we might be a witness of Christ. It is an empowerment for service. Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8 what this power is all about. He said, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

Notice that this power was not *“to witness”* but to *“be witnesses.”* What does that mean? Let me illustrate it this way. A steam locomotive is powered by steam, of course. Now we need to understand that the steam in this locomotive is not there to toot the whistle on this locomotive. The purpose of this power is to run the engine and move the train down the tracks, to help it reach its destination!

This empowering with the Holy Spirit does the same. You see, it is not given to us to toot our whistle, to blow our horn, to draw attention to us. No, this power is given so that the message of the Gospel might be moved throughout the world. That we would move along the tracks that God has set for us, not tooting our whistle, but moving the Gospel message forward!

May we not forget that or lose sight of that. You see, if we do, then we will most likely toot our whistle, draw attention to ourselves instead of moving the Gospel message forward!

And keep in mind that they could not do the work Jesus had called them to do unless they were endued with power from on high, and that power would come as the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them. And folk’s, neither can we! So, this promise from the Father is for us, this empowerment of the Holy Spirit upon our lives to move the Gospel message forward!

VERSES 50-53

Forty days after His resurrection Jesus ascended up into heaven and that took place from the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, by Bethany. As I have said, His work is now going to be carried out through those who believe in Him empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We see this played out for us in the book of Acts where we are told, **“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”** Acts 1:4-11

What a precious promise to us. Yes, He was taken up into heaven but just as He went up He is coming back down to receive us and one day, to set up His Kingdom on this earth!

So, with all of this going on, what was the response of His followers? They worshiped Him because He is God! They obeyed Him because He is God! They had great joy in their lives because God has restored our relationship with Him through Jesus Christ!

It is as Paul said in I Timothy 2:3-6, **“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”**

That should cause us to worship and obey Him and as we are filled with great joy we can take that joy, that is like a flag that is flying high in the castle of our heart when the King is in residence there, and share that with others. And Luke ends with **“Amen.”** What else can be said but “Let it be” or “So be it!”

Before I close this evening, let me say this about worship. It is not about you, it is about God! Worship, many times today ends up being about me, myself and I, the unholy trinity!

And we need to make the music louder, we need to have more of a light show, smoke machine, do this and do that, why? So I enjoy worship. Again, let me be clear on this,

WORSHIP IS NOT ABOUT YOU!!!!!!

Listen to this article and you will see what I mean about worship losing its focus today. We are told,

In recent years worship has been wrenched from the story of God and has been formed by some of the narratives of contemporary culture. Many find only a cultural manifestation of Christianity that bears no mark of spiritual nourishment or sustenance.

Me-oriented worship is the result of a culturally driven worship. When worship is situated in the culture and not in the story of God, worship becomes focused on the self. It becomes narcissistic. Christopher Lasch points to narcissism as a “metaphor of the human condition.”

Certainly from a biblical perspective, sin is fundamentally a rebellion against God, a rebellion that places self at the center. Therefore, we must ask whether it is really a fact that much of our worship has shifted from a focus on God and God's story to a focus on me and my story.

- <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/aprilweb-only/118-13.0.html>

May we get back to the worship of God, the One who loves us so and we were created to worship Him! Like the song we sing, "I coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus!"

As I close, and I mean it, Luke has given us a picture of the humanity of Jesus. And again, what a beautiful picture that he has painted for us so that we may see Jesus a little better, understanding His love for us. Amen!