

Luke 24:36-53
November 1, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Is all doubting sin? How can we know when we cross the line from honest questions that we need to work through to sinful doubting that we need to confess? [Let people engage]

Transition: Last week we processed the encounter Jesus had with two men who were headed to Emmaus. If you will recall, these two men urged Jesus to stay and share a meal with them given that it was getting late in the day. Jesus obliged and broke bread with them, which is when the men recognized the risen Lord. Once they recognized Jesus, He disappeared! In the meantime, these two men got up at once to head back to Jerusalem to convey to the Eleven that it is true that the Lord is risen. Jesus supernaturally appears among the Eleven and the two men from Emmaus who were filling them in on what they observed. Let's read the storyline.

BOOK:

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence. ⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

The Ascension

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

- The final source of peace and assurance is the Word of God

- V.45 Jesus not only enabled them to understand the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, but He also reminded them of what He had taught them, and He explained how it all fit together. He helps us understand how the OT points to Him.
- V.49 I love the description Jesus gives of the Holy Spirit, i.e. “you will be clothed with power from on high.”

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

- Jesus is the one who enables us to understand His Word thru the Holy Spirit

LOOK:

- Study the Scriptures to learn about Jesus.
- Find assurance in the dark moments of life from your faith in the resurrection of Jesus.
- Be aware of Jesus' presence as you celebrate the Lord's Supper.
- Pray that God will make you aware of the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Ask God how you can have a part in his mission to the rest of the world.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 280-281). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Troubled Hearts: He Opens Their Minds (Luke 24:36–46)

So many exciting things had happened that day and so much was unexplained that ten of the Apostles, plus other believers, met together that evening and shared their witness with one another. While Cleopas and his friend were telling their story, *Jesus Himself appeared in the room!* And the doors were shut! (John 20:19)

You would have expected the believers to heave a great sigh of relief and sing a hymn of praise, but instead they became terrified, frightened, and troubled (Luke 24:37–38). They thought a ghost had appeared! It all happened so suddenly that they were totally unprepared, even though several of them had already seen the risen Christ. Mark 16:14 suggests that the condition of their hearts had something to do with the expression of their fears.

Jesus sought to calm them. The first thing He did was to give them His blessing: “Peace be unto you!” He even repeated the blessing (John 20:19–21). “The God of peace” had raised Jesus from the dead, and there was nothing for them to fear (Heb. 13:20–21). Because of His sacrifice on the cross, men and women could now have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and enjoy the peace of God (Phil. 4:6–7).

The next thing He did to calm them was to show them His wounded hands and feet (Ps. 22:16) and assure them that He was not a ghost. Songwriters sometimes mention His “scars,” but the record says nothing about “scars.” The “prints” of Calvary were on His glorified body (John 20:24–29), and they are still there (Rev. 5:6, 9, 12). It has well been said that the only work of man now in heaven is the marks of Calvary on the body of the exalted Savior.

Jesus even ate some honey and fish to prove to His doubting followers that He was indeed alive and real, and He even invited them to *feel* His body (Luke 24:39; 1 John 1:1). With our limited knowledge, we cannot explain how a human body can be solid flesh and bones and still pass through closed doors and appear and disappear, or how it can be glorified and still carry the marks of the cross. We do know that we shall one day be like Him and share His glory (1 John 3:1–2).

Luke 24:41 describes a perplexing emotion: “they believed not for joy.” It was just too good to be true! Jacob had this same feeling when he got the news that Joseph was alive (Gen. 45:26–28), and the nation of Israel experienced it when God gave them a great deliverance (Ps. 126:1–3). Jesus had told His disciples that they would rejoice when they saw Him again, and the promise was fulfilled (John 16:22).

The final source of peace and assurance is the Word of God, so our Lord “opened their understanding” of the Old Testament Scriptures, just as He had done with the Emmaus disciples. After all, the believers were not being sent into the world to share their own personal experiences but to share the truths of the Word of God. We today cannot touch and feel the Lord Jesus, nor is it necessary that we do so; but we can rest our faith on the Word of God (1 John 1:1–5).

Jesus not only enabled them to understand the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, but He also reminded them of what He had taught them, and He explained how it all fit together. Now they began to understand the necessity for His suffering and death and how the Cross related to the promise of the kingdom (see 1 Peter 1:10–12). What a privilege it was for them to listen to Jesus expound the Word!

Joyful Hearts: He Opens Their Lips (Luke 24:47–53)

But privilege always brings responsibility; they were to be witnesses of all that He had said and done (Acts 1:8). A witness is somebody who sincerely tells what he has seen and heard (Acts 4:20), and the word *witness* is used in one way or another twenty-nine times in the Book of Acts. As Christians, we are not judges or prosecuting attorneys sent to condemn the world. We are witnesses who point to Jesus Christ and tell lost sinners how to be saved.

How could a group of common people ever hope to fulfill that kind of a commission? God promised to provide the power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), and He did. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the church and empowered them to preach the Word (Acts 2). After Pentecost, the Spirit continued to fill them with great power (see Acts 4:33).

Witnessing is not something that we do for the Lord; it is something that He does through us, *if* we are filled with the Holy Spirit. There is a great difference between a “sales talk” and a Spirit-empowered witness. “People do not come to Christ at the end of an argument,” said Vance Havner. “Simon Peter came to Jesus because Andrew went after him with a testimony.” We go forth in the authority of His name, in the power of His spirit, heralding His Gospel of His grace.

Luke 24:50–52 should be compared with Mark 16:19–20 and Acts 1:9–12. For some reason, our Lord’s ascension is not given the prominence in the church that it deserves. Think of what it meant to Him to return to heaven and sit on the throne of glory! (John 17:5, 11) His ascension is proof that He has conquered every enemy and that He reigns supremely “far above all” (Eph. 1:18–23).

In heaven today, our Lord ministers as our High Priest (Heb. 7:25) and our Advocate (1 John 2:1). As High Priest, He gives us the grace we need to face testing and temptation (Heb. 4:14–16); and if we fail, as Advocate He forgives and restores us when we confess our sins (1 John 1:6–10). As the glorified Head of the church, Jesus Christ is equipping His people to live for Him and serve Him in this present world (Eph. 4:7–16; Heb. 13:20–21). Through the Word of God and prayer, He is ministering to us by His Spirit and making us more like Himself.

Of course, He is also preparing in heaven a home for His people (John 14:1–6), and one day He will return and take us to be with Him forever.

The last thing our Lord did was to bless His people, and the first thing they did was to worship Him! The two always go together, for as we truly worship Him, He will share His blessings. He not only opened their lips to witness, but He also opened their lips to worship and praise Him!

Dr. Luke opened his Gospel with a scene in the temple (Luke 1:8ff), and he closed his Gospel the same way (Luke 24:53). But what a contrast between the unbelieving, silent priest and the trusting, joyful saints! Luke has explained how Jesus went to Jerusalem and accomplished the work of redemption. His book begins and ends in Jerusalem. But his next book, The Acts of the Apostles, would explain how that Gospel traveled from Jerusalem to Rome!

Is the Gospel going out to the ends of the earth from your Jerusalem?

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 264)

Jesus’ appearance to the gathered followers (24:36–49) (Matt. 28:16–20; Mark 16:14–18; John 20:19–23)

In this appearance three things about Jesus are evident:

24:36–43. First, **Jesus** proved to His followers that He had really been resurrected. Not only did He stand in their presence so they could see Him and His wounds (vv. 39–40), but He also ate food (**a piece of broiled fish**) before them to show that He was not **a ghost**.

24:44–47. Second, Jesus showed His followers all the facts **written ... in** the Old Testament about the Messiah. **The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms** are the three divisions of the Old Testament sometimes referred to in Jesus' day. (More often, however, Moses and the Prophets were said to comprise the OT; e.g., v. 27.) In other words, He showed them from different parts of the Old Testament (e.g., Deut. 18:15; Pss. 2:7; 16:10; 22:14–18; Isa. 53; 61:1) that He is the Messiah and that He must suffer and rise from the dead (Luke 24:46; cf. v. 26). Because of His death and resurrection, the message of **repentance and forgiveness of sins** could **be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem** for they were **witnesses of** His death and His rising from the dead. This became the outline for Luke in his second book (cf. Acts 1:8).

24:48–49. Jesus commanded His followers to remain **in the city** of Jerusalem **until** they had received **power from on high**, a clear reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:8), who was promised by the **Father**.

3. JESUS'S PARTING FROM HIS FOLLOWERS (24:50–53) (MARK 16:19–20).

24:50–53. In **the vicinity of Bethany**, that is, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus **was taken up into heaven** (cf. Acts 1:9–11). The disciples responded **with** worship and **great joy** and kept **praising God in the temple**. As seen frequently in Luke, believers repeatedly responded to Jesus with joy (cf. comments on Luke 2:18) and praise. This attitude set the stage for Luke's next volume which began with Jesus' followers remaining in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:4–14).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1564-1566). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

24:36–43 The Gospels record several resurrection appearances that are at once similar and difficult to reconcile with one another. Matthew's account seems the most summarized, whereas the accounts in Lk and Jn are the most detailed (they appear to use a common source for some of their material). Any relative discrepancies can be accounted for by the different focuses and the necessary summarizing tendencies of all the Gospel writers.

It is clear from a comparison that the following occurred: (1) A group of women that included Mary Magdalene discovered the empty tomb early Sunday morning (Mt 28:1–7; Mk 16:1–7; Lk 24:1–9; Jn 20:1). (2) The women reported the discovery to the other disciples, particularly Peter and John (Lk 24:10–11; Jn 20:2). (3) Jesus appeared to the women sometime after the report to the disciples (Mt 28:8–10; Jn 20:11–18). (4) Peter and John investigated the empty tomb for themselves (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:3–10). (5) Jesus appeared to the group of disciples later that evening (Lk 24:36–43; Jn 20:19–23). Luke added the episode on the road to Emmaus, while John added the appearance to Thomas eight days after the resurrection. Matthew and John then both reported encounters with Jesus in Galilee, the one on a mountain and the other at the Sea of Galilee, both of which must have taken place sometime later. On the relation of Lk 24:44–53 to Mt 28:16–20, see note on Lk 24:44–53.

D. Jesus Reveals Himself and the Meaning of Scripture to the Disciples (24:36–49)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *The resurrected Jesus revealed himself as one with the physical ability to eat and as the one whose life, death, and resurrection fulfilled Scripture.*

24:36. Unexpectedly, Jesus appeared. Again, he showed the nature of his resurrection existence. He could appear and disappear in surprising ways. The unexpected appearance brought the expected Hebrew or Aramaic greeting of *Shalom*—“peace, well-being, wholeness to all of you.”

24:37. Telling one another about the resurrected Christ’s reality, the disciples did not expect to see him. His was a surprise visit. They did not know how to react. Terror reigned in their hearts. Could this be a ghost? You just do not expect to see dead people walking. Intellectual belief had taken hold, but the sudden physical presence was too much for their emotions. The truth had not sunk in to become a part of their emotions. Intellectual acceptance did not drive out their emotional surprise.

24:38. Jesus knew their thoughts and feelings and read their faces. Body language spoke louder than words. Calmly, he asked, “Why do you react this way? No reason for fear and trembling. No reason to doubt the resurrection. It is really me. You can believe. You are seeing me. Calm your emotions. Clear your minds. Enjoy resurrection reality.”

24:39. Come here! I will give you proof, he continued. Touch me. I still have flesh and blood like you do. I am not a ghost, some spirit without a body. Touch me and believe.

24:40–41. They looked at his hands and feet in particular. Apparently, they could still see the nail scars. Even this physical reality was not enough to overcome their emotional shock. It was too good to be true. They were so happy they could not believe it was really happening. They were so amazed they could not believe their eyes. Jesus had another approach. He showed he still had human needs. He was hungry. Could he have something to eat?

24:42–43. They found fish for him to eat. The resurrected Christ could do things humans cannot normally do, like appear and disappear. Still, the resurrected Christ shared certain realities with other people. He still retained the scars and wounds of life before death. All this took a while to sink in for the disciples. Resurrection faith was not easy, natural, and automatic. Resurrection faith took some time. It took getting used to. It required a calming of minds, a stirring of emotions, and a final unifying of mental and emotional faculties to believe that Jesus was risen.

24:44. As with the two followers going to Emmaus, so with the crowd in Jerusalem. Jesus opened Scripture and referred back to the passion predictions. Resurrection was a surprise. It should not have been if they had listened and absorbed his teachings. Scripture did not paint the kingdom the way they had been taught. Scripture did not paint Messiah in terms they expected. Scripture could be misread and misapplied. They had to read Scripture carefully and find what God wanted to say to them through it. Scripture read correctly points to Jesus, to all that Jesus experienced, especially his death, burial, and resurrection. Can you read? Can you hear the voice of God as you read? Do you see Christ as you read? Check how you read and understand Scripture. The first telling point is always this: Does it point you to Christ?

24:45. Scripture cannot be understood by the simple human mind. God has to open the mind to understand Scripture. Reading Scripture is not like any other reading assignment you might

undertake. Reading Scripture must begin with a dedication of your mind and heart to God and with a willingness to listen to God as he speaks to you through Scripture. We understand Scripture only as God's Holy Spirit opens our minds and becomes our teacher.

24:46–48. Again, Jesus went back to his passion predictions. Old Testament Scriptures such as Isaiah 53 showed that the expected Messiah must suffer and die. They also indicated that he must be raised on the third day. This much is past happening. But all the Hebrew Scripture is not yet fulfilled. The mission is just beginning. What Messiah did must be proclaimed. This is why silent witnesses who knew Jesus well had to be at the cross. Eyewitness proclamation was in order. The result of Messiah's suffering, dying, and rising is forgiveness of sins. That is available only through repentance of sins. This comes only one way—by God's witnesses preaching all this in the name of Jesus.

Preach the name of Jesus, he told them. Call for repentance. Promise forgiveness. This is what the Scriptures said would happen. This is what you must do. This is your mission. The mission is worldwide. You cannot accomplish this immediately. You must have a starting point. That is right here where you are, here in Jerusalem. Start where you are and preach the name of Jesus, calling for repentance and promising forgiveness. Then Scripture will continue being fulfilled.

24:49. Not yet. You are not ready to go on mission yet, Jesus continued. One ingredient is lacking. You must have power to do it. The Father has promised that power. It is the power of the Spirit of God. It will come to you. Just wait. When God sends his power from on high to you, then you can begin the mission. Then Scripture will be fulfilled.

E. Jesus Revealed Himself as He Ascended to Heaven and the Church Worshiped (24:50–53)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Jesus is the ascended Lord, worshiped and obeyed by his church.*

24:50. Jesus led them toward his favorite place near Jerusalem, the city of Bethany across the valley north of Jerusalem where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived. He prayed for his followers and asked God's blessings on them.

24:51. Then the unexpected came. Jesus disappeared. This time he disappeared for good. He ascended to heaven. Luke gives no details of this. He simply ends Christ's earthly ministry with simple words. He left them and was taken to heaven. Jesus had said he would enter his glory (v. 36). Here he fulfills his word. Now the church cannot expect to see the resurrected Christ again. They must wait for the promised Spirit.

24:52–53. The church no longer grieves. Jesus' final disappearance does not bring mourning and sadness. It brings joy and worship. The church has heard the resurrection story. His followers have seen the resurrected Lord. They have experienced the spiritual presence in the breaking of bread. They believe in the resurrected Lord. They can tell the story of the resurrected Messiah. They can show that Scripture prepared for the Messiah to come to earth, minister, be betrayed, suffer, die, and be resurrected. They can preach in the name of Jesus. They can call for repentance. They can promise forgiveness. But only after the Spirit comes. Until then, stay in Jerusalem. Stay at the temple. Yes, work from the center of Judaism to preach Christ. Pray. Give thanks. Express joy. Worship. Wait for the Spirit. He will come in Volume Two: the Book of Acts.

MAIN IDEA REVIEW: *Jesus Christ rose from the dead, appeared to many of his followers, promised them the Holy Spirit, and ascended to the Father.*

III. CONCLUSION

He Is Risen!

The Lord is risen, indeed! This is the message that separates followers of Jesus Christ from all other people of the world. If Christ is not risen, we are of all people most foolish. The church must constantly ask why it believes in resurrection and what difference that belief makes. The Gospel writers faced the same questions as they wrote. They did not give philosophical answers. They did not engage in polemical debate. They simply testified to what the church had seen and how the church was different.

The first apostles did not believe the earliest testimony of the resurrection. They thought of it as an old wives' tale told by a bunch of grieving, delirious women. Quickly, they rethought their position. Better check it out. Peter found an empty tomb and discarded linen wrapping cloths. Then Jesus found Peter. His witness convinced the other apostles and followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. Jesus did not rely on only one appearance. He joined the pair on the road to Emmaus and let them recognize him in the breaking of bread. Thus, his followers would always know that when they met to remember him in the breaking of bread and drinking of the wine, they could encounter him. As the pair retreated to Jerusalem and shared their witness, Jesus again appeared, this time to all the disciples. He showed them he was not a spirit or a ghost. Even as he appeared in the resurrection body, they could see his physical reality in the scars in his feet and hands and in his need and ability to eat.

Jesus then showed them that his life, death, and resurrection had completed what Scripture had predicted. What is more, Scripture promised more to come. Repentance and forgiveness of sin must be preached to all the world. That job lay with the witnesses to and believers in the resurrection. So they were to stay put, wait for God's promised Spirit, and then start in Jerusalem and go to the nations in Jesus' name. Having received their mission, they watched as the risen Lord rose again, this time into the heavens to be with the Father. This brought not grief and sadness at their loss, but worship, joy, and praise. Life with the risen and ascended Lord is a life of joy, worship, and praise for his followers.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 24:36-53). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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