

THE RISEN CHRIST

Luke 24:1-53

Key Verse: 24:6

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

Luke the evangelist and historian does not develop theological arguments on the resurrection of Christ; rather, he gives the evidence of the resurrection of Christ from the dead to the women and to the disciples on the basis of God's promise of his death and resurrection in the Bible. He also tells us what happened in the hearts of those who saw the Risen Christ. Therefore, in this passage, we don't want to study the theory of the resurrection, but the evidence of the resurrection. It is also amazing to know what the Risen Christ did. When his disciples were in deep despair, the Risen Christ taught the Bible until they opened their spiritual eyes to see the Risen Christ.

First, he is not here; he has risen (1-12)

Look at verse 1. "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb." Who were they? They were the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee all the way to Golgotha and saw his crucifixion. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion and burial their hearts were broken. Still they found out where the tomb of Jesus was and returned to their own places. They must have stayed up all night in consuming sorrow. They must have thought of Jesus who had been so good, but was crucified by evil men. What they could do was to prepare spices to ornament the dead body of

Jesus. Very early in the morning, they went to the tomb to embalm his dead body with their spices, so as to express their love for the dead Jesus.

They were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who went to anoint Jesus' body. Mary Magdalene had been very sick. But she was healed by Jesus. Since then she dedicated her life to Jesus' ministry. They were happy to follow Jesus. Luke 8:2a says, "and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases...." They were happy to serve Jesus and his company with their own means. Jesus was the meaning and joy of their lives. But when they saw Jesus' unbearable suffering and crucifixion, they felt as if they were in the place of Jesus. Their hearts were broken and their souls lamented.

Jesus was buried in a new tomb of Joseph. The tomb was closed by a big stone. But when the women came they found the stone rolled away. When they entered they did not find the dead body of the Lord. Their last hope of ornamenting the dead body of Jesus was frustrated. See! Something unusual happened. Look at verse 4. "While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them." Despite discrepancies regarding the men (Mt 28:2; Mk 16:5; Jn 20:12), the men by the tomb were the Risen Christ who appeared in the form of the angels. And their appearance was not gloomy; it was indeed glorious. It reminds us of the glorious preview of the Risen Christ on the Transfiguration mount. Mark 9:3 says, "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." This also reminds us of the Risen Christ in Revelation

1:13, "...and among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest." To the women Jesus' death on the cross looked so tragic. But it was not so. Jesus' death on the cross was the prelude of his resurrection. The Risen Christ gives eternal life to those who believe in him. The Risen Christ gives the glorious kingdom of God to those who believe in him. May God bless us to have eternal life and the kingdom of God when we believe his promises.

What did the Risen Christ say to them? Look at verse 5. "In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?'" These women were looking for the dead body of Jesus, not knowing that Jesus had risen. The angels kept on speaking to them. Look at verses 6 and 7. "He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sin-ful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" During the time of his earthly ministry, Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection to his disciples again and again (9:22,44; 18:31-33). These women, who until now had only overheard over the shoulders of the disciples about his suffering, death and resurrection, immediately remembered what Jesus said before his crucifixion. They remembered Mark 14:28. It says, "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." When they remem-bered what Jesus had said, their spiritual eyes were opened and they could recognize the Risen Christ. They saw with their eyes the glorious Risen Christ. When they heard the voice of the Risen Christ, sorrows melted from their hearts. They felt their dead minds come back to life. In a moment, they were

overwhelmed by eternal joy overflowing in their souls. They had not eaten for several days because of their sorrows. But out of nowhere, they felt great strength in their bodies and souls. And they came running and told what had happened to the apostles.

How did the apostles respond to the women's words? They did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. (11) They did not believe because they had no promise of God in their hearts. Furthermore, they did not believe because of their habit of not believing women's words. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. We can see here a sharp contrast between the women and Peter. The women went to the tomb with sorrowful minds. But they met the Risen Jesus and came back with great joy, because the women could remember the promise of God that he would come back. On the other hand, Peter, when he did not remember Jesus' words concerning his death and resurrection, went to the same tomb and saw only a few pieces of grave clothes. Here we learn that we must remember the words of promise. When we are going to see the glorious Risen Christ we must remember Jesus' words concerning his suffering, death and resurrection. May the Risen Christ appear to you when you have his words.

Second, on the road to Emmaus (13-35)

This part is a story about two men on the road to Emmaus. Look at verses 13-14. "Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem." As a matter of fact,

they were running for their lives. "They were talking with each other about everything that had happened." Even though they were running for their lives, the Risen Jesus came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him (15,16). Look at verse 17. "He asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?' They stood still, their faces downcast." "One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, 'Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?'" (18) "What things?" he asked. 'About Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him...' (19,20) They had hoped in the earthly messianic kingdom, and at the time of the crucifixion, they despaired. In addition, they were even more startled and confused by some of the women, who went to the tomb early in the morning, and reported that his dead body was gone and that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive (22,23). Some of their companions also went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. They were bewildered even more to know that his dead body was stolen. They despaired when they saw good Jesus was condemned and crucified by evil men. The story of Jesus' death and that his dead body was stolen made them greatly startled. They despaired, not because of the factual reality, but because of their unbelief.

During the time of his earthly messianic ministry, Jesus taught his disciples about his sufferings, death and resurrection repeatedly. But his teachings concerning his sufferings, death and resurrection were blocked by their own human desires that Jesus would rise to power as

the earthly messianic king and rule the whole world. When the events of his death and resurrection actually happened, his disciples became blank and remembered no words of Jesus. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, they despaired and were on the way to Emmaus to live a hermit life.

But the Risen Christ followed them and rebuked them for their unbelief. The Risen Jesus also began to teach them the Bible all over again. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning his death and resurrection. Look at verses 25,26. "He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?'" "As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them" (28,29). They invited Jesus to come in. Then he went in to stay with them (Rev 3:20). When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then, amazing things happened in their hearts. Their spiritual eyes were opened and they recognized the Risen Christ. They wanted to be with the Risen Christ forever. But the Risen Christ disappeared from their sight, since he had completed helping them to open their spiritual eyes to see God (31). Here we learn that even after his crucifixion the Risen Christ taught the Bible and was waiting for them to open their spiritual eyes.

What happened when they saw the Risen Christ? Look at verse 32.

"They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'" Yes! A miracle happened. Their dead minds became alive again. They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem to proclaim the gospel of salvation where Jesus had been crucified, and where secret police were scattered all around to arrest Jesus' people. After meeting the Risen Christ they became the witnesses of the Risen Christ. When they arrived in Jerusalem, there they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." (34) Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. Their human expectations were gone. On the other hand, they met the Risen Christ. Without meeting the Risen Christ all mankind cannot but despair and end up with the thought of death. But whoever meets the Risen Christ can inherit the kingdom of God.

Third, after this, Jesus appeared to the disciples (36-49)

The Risen Christ came into the upper room where the Eleven were gathered. Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you." (36) They were frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. (37) They had been convinced of his resurrection through many witnesses. Still, they were paralyzed by fear. How did Jesus help them? Look at verses 38,39. "He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 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.'" Jesus died. But he has risen. Jesus took and ate in their presence the piece of fish they had given him. Let's read verse 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."

When Jesus taught them the Bible again and again, even after his resurrection, their spiritual eyes were opened and they could understand the spiritual reality. At the same time, the fear of the devil left and the peace of God began to dwell in their souls.

When they could see the Risen Christ, he gave them the world mission command in the hope of saving all men from their sins. Let's read verses 46-49. "He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. 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."

Fourth, the ascension (50-53)

Look at verses 50,51. "When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven." The ascension of Christ is the promise that he will come again (Acts 1:10,11). The ascension of Jesus gives us the hope of the Second Coming of Jesus. Jesus came to the world first as a Shepherd and Savior. But when he comes again he comes as our King and Judge. He judges all men according to the purpose of their lives (Ro 2:6-9). He gives the crown of life to those who were faithful to him and he condemns those who did not accept the love of God through Jesus.

What happened when they saw the ascension of Jesus? Look at verses 52,53. "Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God." The ascension of the Risen Christ planted great hope and faith in the hearts of his disciples.

The tragic crucifixion was for our sins. The glorious resurrection gives us eternal life and his kingdom. Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus gives the peace of God to those who come to him while on earth. May the Risen Christ dwell in your heart and give you peace.