

# Luke Chapter 24

There are 11 references to the resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus. In Acts chapter 1, Luke writes about the disciples – “to whom He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs. The 11 references are:

1. To Mary Magdalene John 20
2. To the women returning from the sepulchre Matt 28
3. To Peter alone Luke 24:34
4. The 2 on the road to Emmaus Luke 24
5. To the 10 disciples – Thomas absent Luke 24 and John 20
6. To the 11 disciples – Thomas present John 20
7. At the sea of Galilee John 21
8. To the disciples on a mountain in Galilee Matt 28:16
9. To above 500 brethren at once I Cor 15:6
10. To James alone I Cor 15:7
11. To the disciples at His ascension Luke 24:51

There is also a 12th appearance – to Paul on the Damascus road – but this is an appearance by the ascended Christ.

Of the 11 appearances above, four are found in Luke 24.

The chapter divides itself into four sections.

Verses 1 to 12 The discovery of the empty tomb – by the women and by Peter

Verses 13 to 35 The two on the Emmaus road

Verses 36 to 48 His appearance to the disciples in the locked room

Verses 49 to 53 The ascension

## **1. The discovery of the empty tomb – by the women and by Peter**

In this section, Luke does not record the actual appearances of the Lord to the women or to Peter but only the fact that they visited the tomb and found it to be empty. The first to arrive at the tomb were the women.

### **1.1. The women at the tomb**

We read of this band of women in Luke 23. They stood afar off at Calvary and witnessed what was taking place:

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

“His acquaintance” included Mary His mother and His mother’s sister. The other women are described as those “that followed Him from Galilee”. We first read of them in Luke chapter 8. There were a number of women out of whom the Lord cast demons. Amongst them was “Mary Magdalene – the worst case of all, for she had been possessed by seven demons. They could look back on that first encounter with the Lord Jesus and remember it as a life changing

experience. A great transformation had taken place – they had been delivered from the power of Satan. So too have we, as Paul points out in Colossians chapter 1:

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

So grateful were these women to the Lord Jesus that they did not let Him go. Luke 8 tells us that they followed Him from Galilee and ministered unto Him of their substance. They wanted to keep company with Him, and by supplying some material help, they were able to give something back to Him. That should be our motive also for Christian service.

As they journeyed with the Lord, they would no doubt have witnessed many of His miracles – they would know about His works. They would also hear many of His words. The knowledge of these things would but add to their affection for Him. But then came His capture, His trials, and His cross. Those disciples with whom they had travelled on that journey from Nazareth had forsaken Him in Gethsemane. Of the 12 disciples who set off with Him, only one, the beloved John, followed Him all the way to Calvary. But the women were there – they were so in touch with the Lord and His disciples that though He had been taken and tried in the early hours of the morning, they were aware of His crucifixion, and so they stood at Calvary. While all around, men jeered and sought to put Him to shame, these women would feel every blow, be hurt with every insult and every mocking voice. Their hearts went out to Him. Even after He had died, they watched as Joseph and Nicodemus had taken the body down and laid it in Joseph's tomb.

Now in Luke 24:1, they come to the tomb on the first day of the week:

**1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.**

They had prepared their spices, then rested on the Sabbath day. Now they come on the first day of the week, and Luke records the fact that it was "very early in the morning". Because of the love they had for the Saviour, they came as soon as they could. We read of the Jews, when they came to Pilate's judgment hall, that "it was early". They couldn't wait to get rid of Him. The opposite was true of these women.

They came with their spices – to anoint, as they thought, the dead body of Jesus. But what was their meagre quantity of home made spices in comparison to the 100 pounds of spices that Nicodemus had bought to anoint the body of Jesus? It was a token of their affection. They are beautiful examples of true worshippers.

Three of the women are named in verse 10:

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

Joanna is an interesting character – she is described in chapter 8 as being the

wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. From the household of Herod, that great enemy of Christ, came a loyal follower, Joanna.

Acts chapter 13 also describes a man called Manaen, who had been brought up as a child with Herod, so again the gospel had crossed all the boundaries of mankind. Manaen is listed as being one of the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch.

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Mary the mother of James one presumes to be the mother of one of the disciples – not James the brother of John, whose father was called Zebedee, but the son of Alphaeus.

Then there was Mary Magdalene. She was the first to meet the risen Lord, according to John chapter 20. She came with a broken heart, like the other women. John describes how she found the stone taken away from the tomb and ran to tell Peter and John. They came and looked in to find only the grave clothes in the tomb. Verse 10 records:

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

The disciples came and went but Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping. That tells me this that the love that Mary had for the Lord Jesus was even greater than that of Peter, and even John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. Is that not why the Lord appeared first to Mary and not to the disciples? He appeared first to that person on earth who loved Him the most – and that was Mary Magdalene.

The other feature of Mary Magdalene that stands out in John 20 is how she dealt with the angels. There is no hint of any fear on Mary's part, according to John. That is surprising for when we read anywhere else about angelic appearances, fear is always present. The angel Gabriel appears twice in Luke chapter 1, first to Zacharias and then to Mary. His opening words on both occasions was, "Fear not". The same is true of the angel who appeared to the shepherds in Luke chapter 2. So how come Mary is so bold when others trembled? John writes in his first epistle, "There is no fear in love – perfect love casteth out fear". Angels had no appeal either to Mary. John records her action, "She turned herself back". She was so pre-occupied with Christ that angels were of no interest to her.

As we said earlier, Luke does not tell us of the Lord's first meeting with these women at the tomb – he simply records the fact that they spoke with the angels who told them that He was risen. The women return from the tomb to inform the disciples but "their words seemed to them as idle tales" and they believed them not.

## **1.2. The arrival of Peter**

We then read that Peter went and looked in to see the linen clothes "laid by themselves". There was something distinct about the clothes. The very fact

that the clothes were still there would tell the lie to the story put forward by the chief priests that while the soldiers slept, His disciples came and stole away the body. If men had come to steal the body, why would they have unwound the linen clothes and left them behind. But apart from that fact, I believe there was an order about the way the linen clothes were lying. John tells us in chapter 20 that the two angels sat, one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. The clothes were not lying in a heap but just as though the body had passed clean through them. The napkin also that had been put round His head was folded up and lying in a place by itself. No wonder that Luke says of Peter that he departed, "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass."

## **2. The two on the Emmaus road**

**13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.**

Only Luke enters into the details of what took place on the Emmaus road. The question that I always ask myself when reading this story is, "Why were they making this journey at all?" Luke does not tell us yet of the Lord appearing to Mary or the other women, so these two must have left Jerusalem very early in the morning. Yet strange news was already beginning to filter through. The women of the company had been to the sepulchre and had found it empty. They had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Then they knew of the visit of Peter and John who had also been to the tomb and found it empty. Three facts were known to them.

The evidence of the women. The testimony of the angels. The evidence of the disciples.

Did they not believe the women? Were the women telling lies about what they had seen? Why didn't they wait behind to establish what had happened? Did they not believe what the angels had said? Did their words not convince them that He was risen? Did they not believe the evidence of Peter and John who likewise found the tomb to be empty?

They were obviously marked by unbelief at this time, but does the passage indicate why this was the case? I believe we have the answers within the section.

**19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:**

They described the Lord Jesus simply as being a prophet, albeit mighty in word and deed. But in this respect, was He no greater than Elijah or Elisha who also were prophets mighty in word and deed? There is no mention of Him being the Messiah or the Son of God. They therefore had a poor appreciation of who Jesus was, and this was one reason for their unbelief. They were also disappointed with the Lord Jesus, and this comes out in verse 21:

**21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.**

They had hoped that this Jesus of Nazareth would have at this time redeemed Israel ie that He would have been able to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Romans and establish Israel as the head of the nations. But now their hopes have been dashed. He has been crucified and now three days have gone by. They had a poor appreciation of the purpose of God regarding salvation. What would recover the faith of these two despondent and disappointed disciples? They needed a word from the Lord – they needed a fresh appreciation of the person of Christ and the purpose of God. The only place they would get such instruction was from the scriptures themselves, and that is exactly what the Lord gave them.

**27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.**

When the Lord met Mary Magdalene at the tomb, her heart was full of Christ but her heart was broken. All she needed was one word, and the word was “Mary”. That was enough for her. Her broken heart was mended. But these two on the road to Emmaus needed a sermon and that is just what they got. Jerusalem to Emmaus was sixty furlongs or seven and a half miles. The journey would have taken two to three hours, and throughout this time, the Lord expounded from all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself. He taught them regarding the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. They were deeply moved by what He had to say, and later on, in the house, they confessed:

**32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?**

Sad hearts became glad hearts when they met the risen Saviour.

What else can we glean from this passage? See how the Lord first introduced Himself to them.

**17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?**

Cleopas replies with his own question.

**Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?**

The Lord responds with a second, even briefer question.

**What things?**

Did the Lord not know what they were speaking about as He met them? Of course He did. When His disciples were arguing amongst themselves as they walked, as to who should be the greatest, He knew what they had been discussing and asked the question of them. This is what prayer is about. The Lord knows what we have need of, even before we ask Him, but He wants us to ask just the same.

Then when the two of them reached their home in Emmaus, He made as though He would have gone further. They had to constrain Him to enter their home. Did the Lord not want to enter? Again, He was waiting for the invitation.

Revelation 3:20 depicts Him as One who is standing outside the door. He is knocking and seeking admission, but we need to open the door and let Him in. He will not force Himself upon us – do we really want Him as part of our lives?

Then we read of how He became known to them in the breaking of bread, as He sat at the table with them. Perhaps for the first time, they noticed His wounded hands, the marks of Calvary. The scales were lifted from their eyes and they knew Him. It was then they spoke about how their hearts had burned within them. But as soon as they knew Him, He disappeared. His work with these two had been accomplished. Sad hearts became glad hearts. He had recovered two of His own, who had been marked by unbelief. He had established His person and work in their hearts and minds.

The experience on the road and in the house suddenly brought about a great change. These two who surely had walked away from the Lord and His disciples, now arose and returned to Jerusalem. Now they were bursting to share their news, to have fellowship again with the Lord's people. This is the true evidence of recovery.

**33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,**

The disciples, however, have got news of their own to share. Verse 34 continues:

**The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.**

Here was a private meeting between the Lord and Peter. It would have been a painful experience for Peter. He had boasted in the upper room that he would never forsake the Lord. Others might let Him down, but the Lord could rely upon him. He was ready to die for Him. But Peter's confidence was soon exposed as self-confidence. Matthew underlines just how far Peter fell.

He denied

He denied with an oath

Peter began to curse and to swear.

John tells us twice over that Peter stood and warmed himself by the fire. He was becoming comfortable amongst the Lord's enemies, and soon he began to talk like them. In John's account, Peter was confronted by a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off in Gethsemane. This man had also been in the garden, and would have taken special note of Peter who had attacked his kinsman

Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?

Peter is up against it, but he tells a blatant lie.

I know not the man.

Peter had failed miserably. Had you heard Peter that night, you would have doubted his salvation or if he were a believer, you would have doubted if he could ever be fully recovered. But the Lord was interested in the recovery of Peter, and His work as an advocate began even before Peter had sinned. Because of the extent of Peter's fall, it took the Lord no less than eight steps to fully recover him

Before his fall:

1. I have prayed for thee
2. Peter's feet are washed
3. A sign is given – before the cock crow twice..

After his fall

4. The sign fulfilled
5. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter
6. The angelic message from the tomb. "Go tell His disciples, and Peter"
7. The private meeting
8. The public restoration – John 21.

These various steps are illustrated by the repeated use of the little conjunction "and" in John 13, when the Lord knelt to wash the disciples' feet.

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Each individual step in the process was necessary and of equal importance, hence the five "ands" in the two verses. Likewise, we have all these equally vital steps in the recovery of Peter.

A pattern is beginning to emerge in many of the resurrection appearances. He appeared not only to His own, but for His own. He knew the need of each one or of each group, and He met that need. Thus:

He mended the broken heart of Mary Magdalene.

He restored the faith of the two on the road to Emmaus

He recovered Peter from His fall

He dispels the fear in the hearts of His disciples

He dispels the doubts in the mind of Thomas.

He is seen as both Priest and Advocate for His own.

### **3. His appearance to the disciples in the locked room**

**36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.**

This section corresponds to the incident in John 20 where the disciples have gathered in a room with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. They are fearful disciples. They have seen the Lord being arrested, tried, and crucified. Perhaps they think that they would be next. They are fearful. They need peace for their troubled souls. Suddenly, the Lord appears in their midst,. What is the first thing that He says to them? It is simply, "Peace unto you". In John 20, He says it not just once but twice. "Peace unto you". It is just what they needed. In John 20, He goes on to give them even more. He breathes on them and says, "Receive ye Holy Spirit". He gives them a promise of His presence. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so, send I you". He gives them authority to act on His behalf.

23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

He did all these things to bring peace to the anxious hearts of His disciples.

In Luke 24, He gave them two more signs to establish them. First He showed them His hands and feet, the marks of Calvary, to prove that it was really Him.

**39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.**

**40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.**

This was no spirit as they supposed but a body of flesh and bones. He invited them to reach out and touch Him. His was a body that was tangible and recognisable but also a body without constraints. We will have bodies just like His glorious body.

He then asked for meat, and they gave Him broiled fish, which He ate before them. As risen from the dead, He did not need to eat, but He did so as further proof that He was no spirit, but that He had a real body of flesh and bones. Many have since denied the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but here is the proof.

**41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?**

**42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.**

**43 And he took it, and did eat before them.**

He did not give them a sermon as He did with the two on the road to Emmaus, but He did remind them of what had been written in the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms:

**44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.**

**45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,**

They already knew these scriptures. He simply gave them the understanding, that they might understand them. What the disciples were given by the Lord, we have today by the Spirit of God.

In verse 46, He gave them a brief summary of what the scriptures were about, then in verse 47, He told them what to preach. After they had established the truths concerning His death and resurrection, they were to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. These are the fundamental truths of the gospel.

**46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:**

**47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

Finally, He tells them to tarry at Jerusalem. There they would receive the promise of the Father ie the Spirit of God as promised in John 16, and when they received Him, they would be endued with power from on high.



#### **4. The ascension**

**50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.**

**51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.**

**52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:**

**53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.**

The expression "as far as to Bethany" might suggest that Bethany was a long way from Jerusalem, but it lies at the top of the Mount of Olives and is no more than a couple of miles away. I believe the expression has more of a moral lesson than a geographical one. Bethany was the nearest place on earth to heaven and it was so because of a certain home and three people in that home. Bethany stood in contrast with Jerusalem where men had plotted and brought about the death of the Messiah. Bethany, on the other hand, was marked by the following features:

1. A place where He was welcomed – Martha received Him into the house
2. A place where His word was appreciated – Mary sat at His feet and heard His words.
3. A place where His saints could serve Him – "And Martha served" (John 12)
4. A place of communion – Lazarus sat at the table with Him
5. A place where He was worshipped – Mary anointed Him

It is a picture of what the assembly is to Christ – for all of the above reasons. It was therefore a most precious place for Him, so when He ascended back to heaven, He chose Bethany.

Bethany lies at the top of the Mount of Olives, and it is to this very spot that the Lord will return at His appearing in glory.

At the time of His ascension, He lifted up His hands and blessed His disciples. It was their last glimpse of Him. The reaction was – "They worshipped Him". Worship is the exclusive right of deity. It is lovely to end the gospel of the Son of man with a further proof of His deity. When Herod in Acts 12 allowed himself to be worshipped as a god, God smote him with worms and he died. When Cornelius was about to worship Peter in Acts 10, Peter rebukes him. "Stand up. I also am a man". In the Revelation, John would have worshipped the angel that spoke to him, but he too is rebuked. "See thou do it not. Worship God".

The chapter ends with the disciples returning to Jerusalem with great joy, praising God in the temple continually.