

Luke 24:5-8

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? 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 sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words.

In the French Revolution, the French philosopher, Louis Lepeaux, attempted to launch a new religion

- In order to promote his new religion, he tried to enlist the help of Charles Talleyrand
- Diplomat and former Roman Catholic bishop, and asked his advice, who offered this advice
- Talleyrand agreed that it would be a difficult task to found a new religion
- And at first he did not really have anything suggest – but after thinking about it said:
- I would recommend that you be crucified and rise from death on the third day
- Needless to say there is no Lepeaux religion in France or anywhere else

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to the Christian message, it stands or falls with it

- There is no doubt that what the four gospel writers are interested in
- Who was Jesus? And what was the significance of his death? But they also contend he is alive
- In the second part of Luke’s work (the book that we call ‘Acts’), he records the Apostles’ preaching
- Jesus was the promised Messiah (or Saviour); The death of Jesus was part of God’s plan
- God raised him from the dead as he promised; The resurrection of Jesus was witnessed and proved
- Jesus is glorified now and in eternity; All must repent and believe in him
- In the Gospel, Luke shows Jesus to be the Messiah, the Saviour of the World
- he records his birth, his ministry, his betrayal, sufferings and death – but then turns to the resurrection
- showing Jesus is alive and how Jesus had previously told of his passion and resurrection, but we see:

I GOD'S WORD: FORGOTTEN

The gospels begin with a sense of expectancy or hope for the coming of a Messiah or Saviour

- In particular, Luke begins with an account of two miraculous births, John the Baptist and Jesus
- Including the angelic annunciation to Mary, the nativity narrative of the baby born and laid in a manger
- The angelic announcement of the birth of a Saviour and the adoration of the shepherds
- The presentation of Jesus in the Temple, much to the joy of the devout and elderly Simeon and Anna
- And an account of Jesus, as a 12 year old boy at the Temple, in his 'Father's house'
- Luke continues with Jesus baptism, where Jesus is announced as 'God's Son,
- And a genealogy that includes David, the one great earthly King of Israel
- Luke records how Jesus worked many miracles in Galilee showing his authority over sickness, demons
- The wind and the waves, and even over death – all this while proclaiming good news to the poor
- Arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus prophesied God's judgment and the coming of the Kingdom of God
- Rejected by religious leaders and condemned by the Roman authority, Jesus' crime was not what he did
- But who he was, as attested by the superscription on the cross, 'the King of the Jews'

None of the Gospels attempts to give any account as to how the resurrection happened

- Luke tells of the women coming to anoint the body of Jesus, when they cannot do what they had planned
- They naturally hesitate, as Luke says, 'while they were wondering about this' (Luke 24:4)
- The only facts they had were that the stone was rolled away and that the body had gone
- Without the word of God, the women at the tomb did not believe in the resurrection
- Because they had forgotten what Jesus had told them – on the third day he would rise again (9:22; 18:33)
- For the women, for the Apostles and for us it is a matter of hearing:

II GOD'S WORD: PROCLAIMED

It's important for us to notice that Luke does not focus on the discovery of the empty tomb

- Instead Luke focuses on the heavenly messengers who announce the resurrection
- These angels bear the same witness to the resurrection of Jesus, that will be found
- In the early Christian preaching (Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40–42; 13:30–31)

One of the challenges that traditional Christians face is that the story of the empty tomb is a myth

- Reflecting a theological conviction that Jesus is alive without believing in a bodily resurrection
- This view was popularised by David Jenkins (at that time Bishop of Durham) in the 1980s
- Causing hysteria in some circles, but thoughtful Christians do not need to panic or become hysterical
- Every statement of what we call the Nicene Creed is there to affirm what we believe
- In the face of those who denied that truth – and those who denied that truth
- (even in the early church) were more likely to come from within the church than from outside
- Is empty tomb story based on historical experience or theological conviction?
- 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?' (Luke 24:5)
- 'the living' (an expression only in Luke) stresses the factual aspect of the resurrection
- 'he is not here' is obvious, 'he has risen!' (has been raised) is both explanation and proclamation
- this and the whole passage reads as historical experience,
- those who infer that the narrative of the empty tomb is not historical
- are hard-pressed to draw such conclusions from the text
- but again the problem has been forgetfulness of God's Word

III GOD'S WORD: REMEMBERED

Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words (Luke 24:6-7).

The angelic words that Luke records here are not found in the other Gospels

- the women have discovered the empty tomb but what is the explanation
- the angels show the meaning of the empty tomb by proclaiming, 'he is not here; he has risen!'

The turning point in the Gospels is often thought to be Caesarea Philippi, the northern tip of Jesus' travels

- it is here that Peter first says to Jesus, 'You are the Christ of God' (Luke 9:20). Once they knew this
- Jesus said,

'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life' (Luke 9:22).

This a prediction that Jesus repeated (Luke 9:44; Luke 18:31-34)

- It is to these three passion predictions that the angels refer when they say, 'remember how he told you'
- his betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection would have been too much to take in
- Let alone his resurrection – but now, with God's Word remembered
- The women are ready to explain the empty tomb in terms of the resurrection
- It is God's Word proclaimed and God's Word remembered
- That they begin to share with the disciples

IV GOD'S WORD: APPLIED

Prompted by the angels and with a new understanding of the words of Jesus

- The women returned to the eleven faithful disciples and the others with the news
- I think it is really encouraging, not to say realistic, that the men don't believe them
- 'they did not believe the women because their words seemed like nonsense' (Luke 24:11)
- all that Peter achieves by running to the empty tomb is to confirm what the women had said
- The historical affirmation of the empty tomb goes together with the appearances of the risen Lord
- The resurrection consistently catches the disciples off guard – it's a clue to the Gospel's authenticity
- That the disciples find it difficult to adjust to the reality that Jesus is alive
- But as the Gospel unfolds, the disciples meet the risen Lord and, in faith, believe that he is alive

We should not be surprised when people find the resurrection difficult to believe

- The women friends of Jesus and his disciples found it hard to believe
- The initial 'show me' attitude of the disciples is not an unfamiliar attitude
- There is a very real sense in which the disciples were not the 'first believers' but the 'first unbelievers'
- Something significant had to happen to transform them into believers – we see the steps they took
- They found the empty tomb but they did not understand what it meant - God's Word forgotten
- By the word of the angels to the women, and the women to the disciples – God's Word is proclaimed
- People need to read or be taught the gospel message so that they can be presented with the challenge
- This will include information that shows Jesus is no ordinary man, he shows that by his life and ministry
- that he suffered, died and was buried – we have to decide, who is Jesus? And, is he alive today?
- In this we see God's word applied

Unlike hundreds of years of British history, we live in an age where we cannot take it for granted

- That people even know the basics about the gospel message or who Jesus is
- Regrettably that can even be true in church – we live in an age of ‘God Word forgotten’
- It is only by reading, recounting, teaching and preaching the message that God’s Word is proclaimed

When the Apostles began to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ

- They claimed the resurrection was God’s affirmation - Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36)
- The resurrection happened because death could not hold Jesus (Acts 2:24)
- This preaching is not something that the Apostles could have made up
- Or simply a delusion built upon the disappearance of the body
- Something else had to happen to effect this transformation
- And the solution is the resurrection appearances

The resurrection of Jesus is hard to believe; in personal witness, we ought not to expect instantaneous results

- We need not be discouraged when people hear the message and don’t believe
- The women and the disciples in the New Testament were just the same
- We live in an age of forgetfulness of God’s Word; so that Word needs to be proclaimed
- And only when the truth of the Word of God is remembered can the Word of God be applied
- If we conclude, as I think we are right to do, that Christianity stands or falls with resurrection
- Then it seems to me that some people will be resistant to the resurrection – this is a spiritual battle
- And for that reason the Spirit needs to work in hearts as the gospel is shared
- The gospel will always focus on Jesus, his person, ministry, betrayal, crucifixion, death and resurrection
- By faith, we can know the promise, Lo, Jesus meets us/Risen from the tomb! (HP 212)