

CHAPTER 24

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS



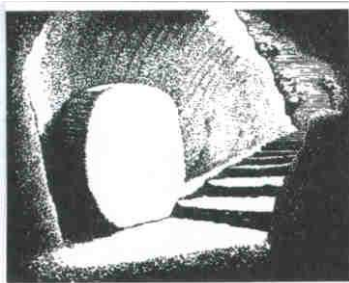
The final chapter of Luke's Gospel presents the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Jesus has accomplished the mission given to him by his Father. The Reign of God has been proclaimed and begun on earth. Now, he reigns in glory with his heavenly Father. He prays and intercedes for his followers who are empowered to continue his mission to every nation and generation.

Chapter 24 establishes the apostles as eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Luke brings the gospel to its stated intention in the first verses of Chapter one:

“Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.”

The apostles were more than eyewitnesses. Their lives have been transformed by encountering the resurrected Jesus. They were united in Jesus. Jesus has empowered them. Jesus has sent them to continue his mission from person to person; community to community; generation to generation. But first, Jesus had to convince them.

DAY ONE: Lk 24:1-12. THE EMPTY TOMB.



24:1 Now on the first day ¹ of the week, at early dawn, the women ² went to the tomb, taking the aromatic spices ³ they had prepared. **24:2** They ⁴ found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, ⁵ **24:3** but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ **24:4** While ⁷ they were perplexed ⁸ about this, suddenly ⁹ two men stood beside them in dazzling ¹⁰ attire. **24:5** The ¹¹ women ¹² were terribly frightened ¹³ and bowed ¹⁴ their faces to the ground, but the men said to them,

“Why do you look for the living ¹⁵ among the dead? **24:6** He is not here, but has been raised! ¹⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ¹⁷ **24:7** that ¹⁸ the Son of Man must be delivered ¹⁹ into the hands of sinful men, ²⁰ and be crucified, ²¹ and on the third day rise again.” ²² **24:8** Then ²³ the women remembered his words, ²⁴ **24:9** and when they returned from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven ²⁵ and to all the rest. **24:10** Now it was Mary Magdalene, ²⁶ Joanna, ²⁷ Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. **24:11** But these words seemed like pure nonsense ²⁸ to them, and they did not believe them. **24:12** But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. ²⁹ He bent down ³⁰ and saw only the strips of linen cloth; ³¹ then he went home, ³² wondering ³³ what had happened. ³⁴

1. What was the scene at the tomb of Jesus when the women arrived?

2. What convinced the women that Jesus had been raised from the dead?

3. Why didn't the apostles accept the women's testimony?

Carrying spices the same women who were present at the cross went to the tomb of Jesus. They were shocked by what they saw. They found the heavy stone rolled away and the tomb empty. The body of Jesus was gone! Two men in dazzling garments spoke to the women. They rebuked the women for looking for Jesus among the dead: *"He has been raised up."* The messengers reminded the women that Jesus had predicted this. He had predicted his suffering, death and resurrection.

The women reported to the cenacle room and reported what they had seen and heard. These women became the first witnesses of the resurrection. They were the apostles to the eleven apostles.

The Eleven and other disciples would not believe the women's testimony. How could the apostles have heard Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection, at least on three occasions, and not be expecting Jesus to be raised from the dead? Apparently they only heard what they expected to hear. At least Peter ran to see for himself. It will take more than the testimony of these faithful women or the report of visions to convince them that Jesus was alive.

DAY TWO: Lk. 24:13-35. THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.



24:13 Now ³⁵ that very day two of them ³⁶ were on their way to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles ³⁷ from Jerusalem. ³⁸ **24:14** They ³⁹ were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. **24:15** While ⁴⁰ they were talking and debating ⁴¹ these things, ⁴² Jesus himself approached and began to accompany them **24:16** (but their eyes were kept ⁴³ from recognizing ⁴⁴ him). ⁴⁵ **24:17** Then ⁴⁶ he said to them, "What are

these matters ⁴⁷ you are discussing so intently ⁴⁸ as you walk along?" And they stood still, looking sad. **24:18** Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, ⁴⁹ "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know ⁵⁰ the things that have happened there ⁵¹ in these days?" **24:19** He ⁵² said to them, "What things?" "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene," they replied, "a man ⁵³ who, with his powerful deeds and words, proved to be a prophet ⁵⁴ before God and all the people; **24:20** and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over ⁵⁵ to be condemned to death, and crucified ⁵⁶ him. **24:21** But we had hoped ⁵⁷ that he was the one who was going to redeem ⁵⁸ Israel. Not only this, but it is

now the third day since these things happened. **24:22** Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. ⁵⁹ They ⁶⁰ were at the tomb early this morning, **24:23** and when they did not find his body, they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, ⁶¹ who said he was alive. **24:24** Then ⁶² some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.” ⁶³ **24:25** So ⁶⁴ he said to them, “You ⁶⁵ foolish people ⁶⁶ – how slow of heart ⁶⁷ to believe ⁶⁸ all that the prophets have spoken! **24:26** Wasn’t ⁶⁹ it necessary ⁷⁰ for the Christ ⁷¹ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” **24:27** Then ⁷² beginning with Moses and all the prophets, ⁷³ he interpreted to them the things written about ⁷⁴ himself in all the scriptures.

24:28 So they approached the village where they were going. He acted as though he wanted to go farther, ⁷⁵ **24:29** but they urged him, ⁷⁶ “Stay with us, because it is getting toward evening and the day is almost done.” So ⁷⁷ he went in to stay with them. **24:30** When ⁷⁸ he had taken his place at the table ⁷⁹ with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, ⁸⁰ and gave it to them. **24:31** At this point ⁸¹ their eyes were opened and they recognized ⁸² him. ⁸³ Then ⁸⁴ he vanished out of their sight. **24:32** They ⁸⁵ said to each other, “Didn’t ⁸⁶ our hearts ⁸⁷ burn within us ⁸⁸ while he was speaking with us on the road, while he was explaining ⁸⁹ the scriptures to us?” **24:33** So ⁹⁰ they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. ⁹¹ They ⁹² found the eleven and those with them gathered together **24:34** and ⁹³ saying, “The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon!” ⁹⁴ **24:35** Then they told what had happened on the road, ⁹⁵ and how they recognized him ⁹⁶ when he broke the bread.

1. Why do you think the two disciples did not recognize Jesus?

2. When did the disciple finally recognize Jesus?

3. What is the most meaningful way in which you experience Jesus?

Luke recounts the appearance of the Risen Savior to the two disciples who had left Jerusalem and were traveling to Emmaus. It is a profound account of how the Risen Lord remains represent within the Christian community. He is present in dialogue and prayer. He remains present to us in the scriptures. And he is marvelously present to us in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The two disciples were present at Jesus’ crucifixion. They were part of the close knit group who received the women’s testimony of the empty tomb. They believed Jesus was dead. They left Jerusalem broken hearted. Jesus sought them out and guided them into the encounter that would transform their lives.

Jesus engaged the two disciples in the events of their lives. He accompanied them to heal their shattered hope, show them the truth of the resurrection and transform them into missionaries.

He does this by personal conversation. The Risen Lord is present through direct dialogue.

Next, Jesus challenges the disciples about their ignorance. He teaches them through the scripture. The Risen Lord is present to us through the scripture, Old and New Testaments. The disciples were deeply moved by the interpretation of the scriptures. Yet they needed something more in order to recognize Jesus.

By the time they reached the town of Emmaus they were spiritually renewed. Finally in the “breaking of the bread” they recognized Jesus. The Risen Lord is powerfully present to us in the Eucharist.

When their eyes were opened to recognize Jesus, he vanished. Jesus had more disciples to convince. Through the power of the resurrection Jesus is no longer limited to time and space. He can be personally present to all his followers. The two disciples who had just made the long journey to Emmaus immediately turned around and returned on foot to Jerusalem. They would have traveled in the darkness of night. Their “hearts were burning” from their personal encounter with Jesus.

Upon entering the cenacle in Jerusalem the apostles and other disciples told the two disciples from that Jesus had also appeared to Simon Peter. Yet they all gathered in the Cenacle full of confusion and apprehension.

DAY THREE: Lk. 24:36-43. JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES IN JERUSALEM.



24:36 While they were saying these things, Jesus ⁹⁷ himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ⁹⁸ **24:37** But they were startled and terrified, thinking ⁹⁹ they saw a ghost. ¹⁰⁰ **24:38** Then ¹⁰¹ he said to them, “Why are you frightened, ¹⁰² and why do doubts ¹⁰³ arise in your hearts? **24:39** Look at my hands and my feet; it’s me! ¹⁰⁴ Touch me and see; a ghost ¹⁰⁵ does not have flesh and bones like you see I have.” **24:40** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ¹⁰⁶ **24:41** And while they still could not believe it ¹⁰⁷ (because of their joy) and were amazed, ¹⁰⁸ he said to them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ¹⁰⁹ **24:42** So ¹¹⁰ they gave him a piece of broiled fish, **24:43** and he took it and ate it in front of them.

1. Why do you think the disciples were frightened when Jesus appeared to them?

1. What did Jesus do and say to convince them that he was truly present?

2. Why is the meal so important in the account of the disciples of Emmaus and in this account?

Jesus appears to all the disciples that are gathered at the Cenacle in Jerusalem. It was the same the same place in which he celebrated his last supper. Even though they have the eyewitness testimony of the two disciples and Peter that Jesus was alive, the community remains confused, suspicious and fearful. Jesus will give them true peace. He will convince them that he is not a ghost or a vision. He challenged them to see with their own eyes and to touch him. He even sat at table with them and ate. He does this by calling them to meal again. Jesus reassures them, not so much about the reality of his physical body, but about the importance of table fellowship to restore them and reconcile them and strengthen them for their mission. Jesus' words and actions are aimed at the healing power of the resurrection celebrated in table fellowship with all. The Eucharist is the key event in encountering Jesus and being strengthened for the Christian mission.

Jesus' Resurrection Body: The exact nature of Jesus' resurrected body remains a mystery. He appeared to his disciples several times, usually suddenly. He was able to pass through closed doors. On the other hand, he had a body that could be seen and touched. He ate food with his disciples. They recognized the body as Jesus' body.

The resurrection of Jesus means more than that Jesus' spirit survived death. People saw Jesus alive in bodily form. This is what convinced his confused and unbelieving disciples that he truly was raised from the dead. Reports about an empty tomb and visions were not enough to open their eyes of faith. Jesus bodily encountered the disciples. These encounters healed their shattered faith, forgave their sinfulness and transformed them to be bold witnesses in his name.



St. Paul was the first recorded writer of Jesus' resurrection. Almost 30 years before Luke wrote his gospel based on the eyewitness accounts of the apostles, Paul wrote what he received from the witnesses. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul relates that Jesus appeared to more than 500 believers at a single event.

“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then all the apostles. Last of all he appeared to me.” 1 Cor 15:3-8.

DAY FOUR: Lk. 24:44-49. JESUS COMMISSIONS THE DISCIPLES.



24:44 Then ¹¹¹ he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me ¹¹² in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms ¹¹³ must be fulfilled.” **24:45** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures, ¹¹⁴ **24:46** and said to them, “Thus it stands written that the Christ ¹¹⁵ would suffer ¹¹⁶ and would rise from the dead on the third day, **24:47** and repentance ¹¹⁷ for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed ¹¹⁸ in his name to all nations, ¹¹⁹ beginning from Jerusalem. ¹²⁰ **24:48** You are witnesses ¹²¹ of these things. **24:49** And look, I am sending you ¹²² what my Father promised. ¹²³ But stay in the city ¹²⁴ until you have been clothed with power ¹²⁵ from on high.”

1. How did Jesus open the minds of his disciples?

2. How do Jesus’ instructions in this passage apply to us today?

3. When will the disciples begin their ministry?

Having convinced his disciples of his physical resurrection, Jesus gave them his final instructions. As with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he explained to them what was written in the Old Testament scriptures. Their minds were opened to understand that Jesus had fulfilled the law and the prophets. Jesus prepared them to be his witnesses to God’s new covenant of forgiveness and salvation with His people.

The disciples were to be Jesus’ witnesses. They were to proclaim what they themselves had seen and heard. First, however, they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. They would be transformed by the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them to fulfill this mission.

In the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke recounts that 120 believers assembled in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. These included Mary his mother and the

women who had followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. All were witnesses and received the anointing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.



DAY FIVE: Lk. 24:50-53. THE ASCENSION.

24:50 Then ¹²⁶ Jesus ¹²⁷ led them out as far as Bethany, ¹²⁸ and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. **24:51** Now ¹²⁹ during the blessing ¹³⁰ he departed ¹³¹ and was taken up into heaven. ¹³² **24:52** So ¹³³ they worshiped ¹³⁴ him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ¹³⁵ **24:53** and were continually in the temple courts ¹³⁶ blessing ¹³⁷ God. ¹³⁸

1. Why was it important that Jesus appeared several times to his disciples?

2. Why is it important to the mission of salvation that Jesus ascended to his Father?

3. How does Jesus bless us today?

The entire chapter has focused on the disciples' role as eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. The disciples were commissioned by Jesus to share their personal experience of the resurrected Lord with the world.

The Ascension concluded Jesus' earthly ministry. The event enabled the eyewitnesses to see both the risen Christ on earth and the eternal Christ returning to heaven. Moreover, the Ascension greatly expanded Jesus' ministry from its geographical earthly base to its unlimited heavenly reality. Jesus had returned to his Father in glory where he prays and intercedes for his disciples. Through the Ascension Jesus blessed his first disciples. At the right hand of his Father in heaven, Jesus continues to bless and send us in mission. Luke makes it clear that the Ascension is not the end of the mission - it is but a new beginning. This is the period of the Church and its continuation of Jesus' mission.

The disciples fall down and worship Jesus. He is acknowledged as more than a prophet, teacher, healer or martyr. He is totally identified as the Messiah, truly God and truly man.

Upon the Ascension the disciples filled with joy enter the temple in Jerusalem praising God. The story ends where it began- in the Temple of Jerusalem. Jesus' earthly life has been completed. The life of the Church is about to begin. The story of mission continues in the Acts of the Apostles. The mission of Jesus in the Church continues with us.



FR. JUDGE ON THE RESURRECTION:

“Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! Rejoice and be glad! ‘This is the day which the Lord has made’ (Psalm 117:24). Rejoice and be glad, for this day from the beginning of the world has been made for joy and gladness.

Today is a day of universal joy and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving should be in our hearts because of what this day means. First of all, let us be glad for Jesus’ own dear, sweet self. He has conquered and triumphed over

the machinations of wickedness and injustice. The powers of evil and darkness are in flight. Rejoice above all because he is our Savior, our Lord, our Redeemer; just because he is Jesus Christ. This is the reason for our joy today.

There were many reliable witnesses whose testimony commends itself to the most exacting tribunal on account of their number, their honesty and their trustworthiness. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, to the disciples at Emmaus, to St. Paul, even to large assemblies of people. St. John declares these witnesses trustworthy: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands handled...we declare to you.’ (1 Jn: 1-3)

Joyfully then, turn your faces to the open, emptied tomb. Rise with Christ and seek the things that are above, for ‘he is not here, but is risen.’ (Lk, 24:26). Our preaching is not in vain, and your faith is not in vain.” (Fr. Judge. The Holy Ghost Magazine. April 1926)