

## The Third Day (Luke 24:1-35)



No human eyes witnessed Jesus rising from the dead. It was too holy, too intimate.

It was an act carried out solely within the Triune God. After His resurrection, Jesus could have publicly shown Himself alive to Pilate, Herod, and to the rest of the world. But Jesus only showed Himself to those who truly wanted to know the truth. And He revealed His resurrected self by gradual unfolding: (a) evidence; (b) witnesses; (c) personal encounters. Also, there was a plethora of human response to Jesus' resurrection: (a) the women, the first witnesses; (b) men, and Simon Peter; (c) the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

### A. The Evidence and The Witnesses (v1-12)

**The Women** were the first to see the risen Lord (Mk 16:9; Matt 28:9-10), Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women with them (v10). What brought these women to the tomb so early on Sunday morning at the crack of dawn? They had an unfinished job.

- 1) They had to finish embalming Jesus' body. It was the Jewish custom in those days for a loved one who died. They wrapped the spices and perfumes around the body with long linen bandages. This would delay the decay and keep the beautiful smell on the body for a while. Normally decay sets in by the fourth day and the smell of decay would be evident.

The women wrapped Jesus' body with 45kg of myrrh and aloe (Jn 19:39). This was the very last act of love and honour they could do for Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, they only had three hours (3-6pm) to bury Him because the High Sabbath day of the Passover was starting at the sunset. They had three hours in which to ask for Jesus' body, take Him down from the cross and carry Him to the tomb, and then embalm Him. They were racing against time, and they did their best but embalming Jesus' body had to be hurried.

So, the moment the Sabbath was over on Sunday morning when it was still dark, the women rushed back to the tomb to finish the work. Their nerves would have been on edge from the trauma of the shocking events of the past few days. But they were prepared to work in the wee hours of the morning with Jesus' body which would be stiff by now with rigor mortis. This was devotion, a costly act of love.

- 2) On the way, the women were talking about how they would move the stone away from the tomb, which weighed around 1 ½ ton. But when they arrived, to their surprise they found the stone already rolled away (v2). And Jesus' body was gone! They were confused and distressed. Was Jesus' body stolen? They didn't know what to do or where to look. Right then two angels appeared in shining garments. They were terrified, their knees buckled, and they collapsed to the ground.

Truth is angels are all around us, always intervening at important junctures of our life. They were there when Jesus was born, when He was being tested in the wilderness, when He was in Gethsemane, etc. Why were they in the tomb? They were NOT there to let Jesus out of the tomb, but to let these women in! They must have heard the women's conversation, *'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?'* (Mark 16:3)

- 3) The angels had a message for them, *'Why do you seek the living among the dead?'* (v5) i.e. *'Why are you here? Why are you looking for the Lord in the wrong place?'* i.e. *'Don't you remember what He said back in Galilee? 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful man, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'* (v7 c.f. 9:22; 17:25ff, 18:32ff) Already two out of the three prophecies have come to pass exactly as Jesus said.

Today was the third day! How come there was no expectation whatsoever of the third prophecy, Jesus' resurrection? They put common sense above the word of the Lord, allowing it to dictate their life, expectation, and action. And they forgot Jesus' words. When common sense and the word of God are in contradiction, what do you believe? Common sense says dead people do not come back to life but the word of God says, one day all the dead will rise and be judged, and those who put their trust in the Lord will have their sins forgiven and live forever with Him. So, these wonderful women were rebuked by the angel for their unbelief. And on their way they met the Lord, who tells them, 'Rejoice.' (Matt 28:10)

**The Men** – How did the eleven apostles respond when the women came to tell them what they witnessed, and the evidence they gathered?

- 1) They didn't believe a word of it, 'Are you delirious?' 'Nonsense' (NET). Even after three years with Jesus and repeatedly hearing Him prophesying His death and resurrection, they still did not believe! That's why Jesus later said to them, 'Foolish ones, slow of the heart to believe.' (v25) Their lack of faith in the Lord's words hindered them in moving forward with the Lord. On the other hand, this shows the gospels were not written by men ready to believe sensational claims. They were the down-to-earth men, working men, fishers and taxmen. They needed to be convinced for themselves. Women's response came from the heart first while the men's response started with the head. This explains why men are often slower. But to their credit, once the men found out the truth for themselves, every one of them lived like a blazing torch, even to the point of giving up their lives for the Lord.
- 2) Peter must have said to himself, 'If this is true, I must meet the Lord straight away.' He started running to the tomb. He was going to check the evidence for himself: 'the large stone rolled away'; 'the turban and linen folded by the side', which is extraordinary; and 'the missing body of Jesus.' All true! Except the angels were gone. Peter went away in amazement. Where to? We don't know. He was alone, but he must have cried out to God. The Lord appeared to Peter that morning. This is a great untold story! (v34; 1 Cor 15:5) It may be too sacred to share. Although Peter didn't have the immediate faith to believe in Jesus' resurrection, he went looking for the evidence, followed the thread, and sought the Lord for the truth. Peter didn't have to see the angels like the women did. That same morning he met the Lord. Just as Jesus appeared to Mary Jesus appeared to Simon.

## B. The Encounter (v13-35)

This is a beautiful account of an encounter with Christ. It is now the sunset of the third day. Cleopas and his companion are two unknown followers of Christ. They might be man and wife, rather than two men. They were returning home to Emmaus directly from the disciples' camp in Jerusalem. They were grieving the unjust and untimely death of Jesus, and confused about the talks of the missing body of Jesus, and some women's wild claims of encountering the Lord that very morning.

- 1) Blind Eyes - As they were walking into the sunset, Jesus appeared and overtook them on the road. But their eyes were 'restrained' from recognizing Jesus (v16). Why? (a) The sun was setting and it was hard to see? (b) Their eyes were too full of tears? (c) They had never seen Jesus at close range? (d) The last appearance of Jesus was so marred from the suffering? (e) Jesus appeared in 'another form' (Mark 16:12)? The truth is, Jesus could be nearer than someone sitting right next to us, and we might not be aware of Him. And Jesus was training His disciples to recognize Him, not by His 'physical presence' but by His 'spiritual presence.'
- 2) Burdened mind – 'Cleopas' means *Father's celebration*, but they were burdened down with deep sadness. Why? (v19-24): (a) They lost the best man, Jesus of Nazareth. (b) A great prophet, mighty in word and deed, was gone. (c) This man had not died a normal death, but murdered unjustly, brutally by crucifixion; (d) Their own Jewish leaders had done this to this great man – an unthinkable evil; (e) They pinned all their hopes on this man and their hope was dashed to pieces. (f) Their last flickering hope was now about to be extinguished after hearing the reports of encountering the risen Christ. But the third day was almost over, 'but Him they did not see,' (v24) and they could no longer take seriously such wild claims.
- 3) Burning Heart - Jesus said, '*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and enter into His glory?*' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.' (v25-27) Why were they so sad? Because they failed to believe in all of God's word. They believed only the bits they could take, and it left them with a confusing picture of God and life. Evil seemed to have the upper hand. The risen Christ gave the two disciples a systematic Bible study from cover to cover about Himself. Suddenly their hearts began to burn, and they could 'see' the cross in an entirely different light. The greatest tragedy and sadness became the greatest victory and joy! Do you see your victory in the cross?

- 4) Opened Eyes - When they drew near to a village Jesus indicated He wanted to go further. But they constrained Him, *'Stay with us.'* (v28-19) Note, only when they invited Jesus, He responded. When your mind is instructed and your heart is burning, then you need to make a decision to invite Jesus into your life. Once Jesus came in, Jesus 'broke bread' and gave it to them, then suddenly *'their eyes were opened'*, and they *'knew'* Him (v31). Then Jesus vanished from their sight. How did they know it was Jesus? Did he have nail-pierced hands? We don't know. What is important is that they came to *'know Jesus personally'*. It happened in the last minutes of the third day as Jesus had promised. He appeared to them in Person. They realized they had an encounter with Jesus in the Word and in the breaking of bread in fellowship.
- 5) Running Feet - They were so excited now that they ran uphill all the way back to Jerusalem - a 7-mile journey at night - to proclaim to the eleven apostles, *'He is alive!'* The apostles replied, *'Yes, we know. The Lord appeared to Simon.'* (v34; 1 Cor 15:5). Even today thousands of people are meeting Jesus all around the world every day.

### C. Conclusion

Do you know that Jesus is alive? Do you have a relationship with Jesus?

Some people say, 'I respect Jesus, but I am struggling with faith.' God does not reject weak faith so long as you are truly a seeker of the truth. Check the evidence – the Bible. Listen to the witnesses, and the testimonies of those who have met the risen Jesus. Then you must get alone and talk to the Lord with an open heart.

- 1) In the 1920s two Oxford men, Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West, decided to spend the whole summer vacation to prove that Christ never rose from the dead. After following the evidence, they both became believers, and have written a book called, 'Observation on the history and evidence of Jesus Christ.'

20 years later Frank Morrison who was studying law, set out to prove the same. Morrison became a believer instead, and he too ended up writing an entirely different book, 'Who moved the stone.' If you are truly a seeker of truth, you will find the Lord, like Peter, Cleopas, etc.

But don't seek Jesus among the dead because He is alive!

- 2) Jesus could have appeared to all of them that morning, but He didn't. He gently revealed Himself incrementally, starting with small evidence leading up to undeniable encounters for His followers who looked for Him. The rolled away stone, the empty tomb, the folded facecloth and linen strips, then the appearance of the angels. His disciples had the opportunity to hear the testimony of a personal encounter with the angels. That morning Jesus appeared to Mary and the women, then to Peter by himself, then to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, then to the eleven apostles, and finally Jesus appeared to the five hundred. Can you see how it grew? From one to another one, then to two, then to eleven, then to five hundred. Little by little, Jesus drew His disciples to Himself until every one of them developed a solid relationship with Him.
- 3) You can have the evidence after evidence, but that won't be enough. You can hear my testimony, then other people's testimony, but that won't be enough either. You need to follow the thread, but at some time you need to talk to the Lord yourself. You need to invite Him into your heart and make Him your Saviour and your Friend. Seek to have quality time with Him. Your heart will burn, your eyes will open. Most of all, you will encounter the Lord because He lives in you.