

17. Luke 24:1-53





# THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVE

Luke 24:1-53

Jesus' death marked for him, as it does for us all, the end of the only kind of existence of which we human beings have direct sensory experience.

From the beginning of recorded time, however, we find an expectation that death marks a horizon but not an end of our existence (see Egypt).

We have already seen that there was a difference of opinion among Jesus' contemporaries concerning life after death (e.g., the Sadducees 20:27-40).



Jesus himself believed that beyond the grave we would experience life, that is to say communion with God. His belief was based on a conviction which he had about God who, having given life, would not withdraw the gift (Luke 20:38).

The fierce opposition which Jesus encountered led him to warn his followers of the death that was surely awaiting him in Jerusalem.

However, he did not fail to share with them also his trust that God would raise him to life  
**‘on the third day’** (see the commentary on 9:32).



That Jesus was, indeed, raised to life by God  
is at the very centre of Christian belief.  
This is clear from the whole of the New Testament.

Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles,  
witnesses to this belief in the early Christian community.

Paul is also clear that:

‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
nor has the human heart conceived  
what God has prepared for those who love God’ (1 Corinthians 2:9).



Having stressed that belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and so belief that this is what God has in store for us is essential to Christian belief, Paul goes on to assert:

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44

‘But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” That is a foolish question! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be ... God gives a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body ... So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown an ensouled body (‘ψυχικόν’), it is raised a spiritual body (‘πνευματικόν’).’



When we read the accounts of the post-crucifixion experiences of Jesus' disciples, we are not reading accurate descriptions of events. Rather we are reading dramatic accounts of experiences: accounts which include the meaning these experiences had for Jesus' disciples, and the meaning these experiences came to have in the life of the Christian communities.



1. The women and the empty tomb Luke 24:1-11

Mark 16:1-8

Luke 24:1-5 (Mark 16:1-5)

On the first day of the week, at early dawn,  
they ('the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee, 23:55)  
came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

(Matthew 28:1 - 'went to visit the sepulchre)

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,  
but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.  
While they were perplexed about this,  
suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.  
The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground.



Luke 24:5 (Mark 16:6)

The men said to them: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?

He is not here. He has risen.

Luke 24:6-7

Remember how he told you, while he was still in **Galilee**, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

‘He (the young man dressed in a white robe) said:

Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to **Galilee**; there you will see him, just as he told you’ (Mark 16:7).



## on the third day rise (ἀνιστῆμι) again

To point to something that is beyond our everyday experience we must use imagery and analogy.

ἀνιστῆμι has been used numerous times in Luke in its everyday sense of ‘stand up.’

It is significant used of Simon’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:39); and the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:55). Some people thought Jesus was ‘one of the prophets who had arisen’ (Luke 9:19). The rich man in Jesus’ parable is told: “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” When Jesus told his disciples of his coming death, he added: “on the third day the Son of Man will be raised’ (Luke 18:33; also 24:7, 46).



It is much the same with another common word: ἐγείρω to be raised up'.

Luke uses this verb for the first time in the hymn of Zechariah: 'He has raised up a mighty saviour for us' (Luke 1:69). It is a simple everyday word used, for example when Jesus tells the paralysed man: 'Stand up and walk' (Luke 5:23; compare 6:8; 11:8; 13:25).

However, ἐγείρω is also used of raising from death as, for example, when Jesus addresses the dead son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14), or the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:54). One of the signs of Jesus' Messianic work is that 'the dead are raised' (Luke 7:22; compare 20:37). Some were saying that Jesus himself was John the Baptist who had been 'raised from the dead' (9:7), and Jesus himself expressed his trust in God that he would be 'raised' (Luke 9:22).



Because of certain ways in which they experienced the risen Jesus, Jesus' disciples came to believe that Jesus, who was crucified, was in truth alive and active among them after his death. God had raised him from death into the life-beyond-death. It was the wonder of this that brought them through their fright and the shattering of their hopes to the new energy that empowered them to do to others what Jesus had done to them. It was this spirit that brought about the incredible growth of the Christian community.



## Luke 24:8-11

Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

So they went out and fled from the tomb,  
for terror and amazement had seized them;  
and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid' (Mark 16:8).



The story of an empty tomb already contains, for those with faith, a promise and a hope. Luke's church experienced Jesus, as do we all, as the one who 'is not here'. They had to wait on God. Jesus was 'living' (see also Luke 24:13; and Acts 1:3; 25:19); he was 'risen'. God was faithful to Jesus, and God will be faithful to those who lose their lives because of him (Luke 9:24).

The women, the first missionaries of the resurrection, tell 'the eleven and all the rest', the 'apostles', but no one believes them.



Luke does not present the empty tomb as a proof of the resurrection: the women are ‘perplexed’, and the others do not believe. The empty tomb narrative does, however, focus our attention on a question. Where is Jesus? We must not look for him in a tomb.

It can prepare us to be vigilant, so that when the risen Jesus comes to us we will be open to his presence and his call.

If we are vigilant, we will ‘see’ him when he comes.



## 2. Luke 24:12

Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

see Luke 24:24: ‘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.’

The empty tomb belongs within the horizon of our sensory experience. The most it can do is cause amazement and raise a question. It cannot substitute for experiencing Jesus himself and was not the reason for Peter's faith in the resurrection.

Is the narrative a liturgical re-enactment, much like our Easter vigil?



José Pagola: Jesus: an historical approximation  
(Convivium Press 2015, page 406)

‘The story of the empty tomb carries a message of great importance. It would be a mistake to look for the crucified Jesus in a tomb; he is not there; he does not belong to the world of the dead. It would be a mistake to worship and acknowledge him for what he did in the past. He has risen. He is more full of life than ever. He is still enlivening and guiding his followers. We must “go back to Galilee” and follow his steps: curing those who suffer, accepting those who are excluded, forgiving sinners.’



### 3. The disciples on the road to Emmaus

Luke 24: 13-14

(Marcan conclusion 16:12-13)

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about sixty stadia (c. 11 kilometres: stadium = c. 200 metres) from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.





## Luke 24:15-19

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him.

And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”

They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?”

He asked them, “What things?”



## Luke 24:19-24

They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

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.”



## Luke 24:25-29

Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them.



## Luke 24:30-32

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'





## Luke 24:33-35

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'It is true. The Lord has risen. He has appeared to Simon!' [see 1 Corinthians 15:4-5] [see Luke 22:32]

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



#### 4. Luke 24:36-39 (Marcan conclusion 16:14)

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” (Metaphor! Ezekiel 37 - the dry bones)

1Corinthians 15:44

‘It is sown an ensouled body, it is raised a spiritual body.’

1Corinthians 15:50

‘Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’



## Luke 24:40-43

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering,

he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”

They gave him a piece of broiled fish,  
and he took it and ate in their presence.



## Acts 10:40-41

‘God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear,  
not to all the people but to us who were chosen as witnesses,  
and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.’



## Luke 24:44-49

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” (see on road to Emmaus, Luke 24:27)

Then he **opened their minds** to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. (see Acts 1:8) (Marcan conclusion 16:15)

And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”



Jesus willed to entrust to his disciples the mission of proclaiming the good news to all nations.

‘For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth’ (Paul at Antioch, Acts 13:47).

To empower them to carry out this mission, he will send upon them the **Spirit** promised by his Father (see Acts 1:4).

This is the **Spirit** that came down upon his mother at the time of his conception (Luke 1:35).

This is the **Spirit** that descended upon him at his baptism (Luke 3:22),

and that inspired, directed and sustained him throughout his public ministry.



## 5. The blessing of the risen Lord Luke 24:50

Then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany,  
and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

### Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.



## The risen Jesus is with God Luke 24:51-53

While he was blessing them  
he withdrew from them  
and was carried up into heaven.

And they worshipped him,  
and returned to Jerusalem  
with great joy;

and they were continually  
in the temple blessing God.

