

Home Church Study Guide—April 4, 2010
Resurrection (Luke 24)

The importance of the resurrection cannot be overstated. For the believer in Jesus, it is everything. It is the vindication of all Jesus' teachings and of His death itself. Many have given their life in martyrdom, only One has risen to demonstrate that the power of death has been broken. The power of sin has been destroyed. Satan has been defeated.

To this day, we meet together on "resurrection day" to celebrate this great victory. The most astounding experience of joy ever celebrated on this earth is surely when Jesus' followers come to understand what had happened. The faithful women, sadly walking to the tomb, expecting to handle a stiff and decaying body, dreading seeing His lifeless and scarred body, were first disconcerted when they saw that the tomb was opened. What did they expect to find? Perhaps others were already there, working on the precious body of their fallen Lord. Or maybe someone was doing harm to the body, attempting to desecrate that which remained of Jesus. Do you think they picked up pace of their walk when they saw the tomb rolled away? As they entered, they were shocked to see the body was gone. Luke tells us they "wondered" about this. Can you imagine the conversation at this point? "What has happened? Has someone taken the body?" From other gospel accounts, we know that is what they thought.

Does all this surprise you? How many times had Jesus spoken of His death, burial and resurrection? Over and over again, He told them this had to occur. How could it be that not one of His followers remembered those words? This is an important point for us. If we are not careful, we only hear Jesus say what we want to hear. We want to enjoy His blessings without being willing to participate in His suffering. We want to be known as His friends and followers as long as that assures us of power and prestige. Are we willing to hear Him speak of suffering and even death? Can we take up our cross and follow Jesus? How many times does He tell us that we cannot have life if that is what we seek? It is only through dying to self for His sake and the gospel that allows us to experience life.

My point is that we shake our heads wondering why these women and the disciples of Jesus couldn't remember what Jesus had prophesied about His own death, but we may well be guilty of not hearing Jesus speak to us about our own need to die. It was only when the gleaming men (angels, we suppose) reminded the women of the words of Jesus that they remembered them. This would be a marvelous moment to experience, would it not? To see the women's expressions as they remembered the words of Jesus? How different the following conversations would be than those just a few minutes before while still in the tomb. Confusion was replaced with joy and celebration! In fact when they ran back to tell the apostles, now only eleven because of Judas' actions, the disciples did not believe them because their message seemed like nonsense. My guess is the women were so excited; they weren't making a lot of sense. Empty tombs, angels, resurrection, and unbridled joy will do that to a person!

Peter, being Peter, wasn't satisfied with "not believing." He ran to the tomb and verified what the women had found. In fact, he discovered the grave clothes—a fact that perhaps the women had not shared. He was left wondering what had happened until later in the day when Jesus personally appeared to him.

What does the resurrection mean to you? Paul said without it, we are miserable people. But since we know He is risen, we are full of hope and joy. Every word spoken by Jesus is true. So now, we have everything we need for life. We have the truth embodied in a Savior who gave Himself as a sacrifice for my sins, and is risen to give me a confident hope. Because the power that raised Jesus from the dead can also raise me up from my sins (Col. 2) and lead me to new life. We gather the bread that represents His perfect life, and we commit our lives to being the body of Christ in our world. We take the cup, that which represents the blood of the new covenant, and it flows into our bodies like life flowing into that which is dead—and bringing it to life. And now we live a new life, committed to showing the world that our Savior is risen.

“So What” for Home Church discussion:

1. How does the thought of Jesus' resurrection influence your daily living?
2. What can we do to encourage one another to live the life of hope to which Peter refers in I Peter 3:13-16?
3. In what specific ways can I live out the truth of the resurrection in the context of my life? (Encourage one another to think through this carefully and specifically).