

The Death of Christ (8) Finding Life at an Empty Grave

KSBC 04.12.09

Luke 24:1-53

INTRO Life tends to get complex. Challenges and pressures mount in our every day experience that cause us to question our understanding of God, his awareness of us and whether he is in fact trustworthy. Luke wrote this account of Jesus life and teaching with care and research to address the confidence issue. In the increasing complexities of life, is Jesus worthy of our trust, obedience and love? Does Jesus have a resume that establishes him as uniquely powerful, absolute in authority and majestically worthy? Are you confident, even certain enough to lose your life to gain his? Luke writes to minister to you who have ever asked the question, is Jesus really worth living and dying for?

This is a huge concern. Religious people never ask this question. Good, self righteous people never lack confidence in Christ because he is of no concern to them. Churches are literally filled with people who have high regard for Jesus but seldom struggle with certainty because self confidence is a far more crucial issue for them. Luke's gospel presents Jesus as the one and only God man who deserves and demands our allegiance, trust, obedience and literally our lives. Luke would be pleased to know that after reading his book, you made radical changes in your life to obey and serve Jesus. So radical, that every once in a while you had to come back and read Luke again to have your confidence built up that Jesus is real and worth it.

As we approach the end of Luke's gospel, we are faced with this issue of certainty again. Luke is drawing his readers into a response by involving us with several characters around the empty tomb on Sunday morning after Jesus was crucified. The common element to each of these individual spiritual journeys is that Jesus dead body is not where it is suppose to be. The characters in this account were unable to interpret their surroundings and the events taking place. They saw the empty tomb and could only interpret it in a way that led to confusion or astonishment. God intervenes, just like he is doing this morning, to help people struggling to understand or make sense of what is going on in their lives. He helps people find life at an empty grave.

Luke 24:1-53 The Empty Tomb: Scenes of Uncertainty

Scene 1	1-12	Some women followers wonder.
Scene 2	13-35	Two followers confused.
Scene 3	36-49	Eleven disciples doubt.
Conclusion	50-53	Many confident & joyful followers.

Finding life at an empty grave is a journey that is marked by distinct steps or layers of understanding & response that are seen in each of these three concluding story scenes.

For you to find life at an empty grave . . .

1. Identify and acknowledge your uncertainty regarding Jesus. 1-4a; 13-24; 36-38

Note the varied and repeated responses to the fact of the empty grave and the events surrounding it. For Luke, the empty tomb starts the journey of gracious revelation from God that 'seals the deal' for these discouraged followers. Mark your beginning point this morning. Where is your confidence level in Christ given the specific circumstances and unsolved riddles of your life today?

- The women are perplexed. V.4
- The apostles think it is nonsense. V.11
- Peter is hopefully wondering. V.12
- Two apostles are quite confused. V.17, 22-24
- A group of disciples are troubled with doubt. V.37-38

Compare with changed people of v.48-53

This step is necessary as our uncertainty and doubts do define what separates us from God and what Jesus so wonderfully answers in his life, death and resurrection.

2. Wrestle with challenging and clarifying rebukes from God. 5b, 25, 38-40

Note that in each case of confusion and complexity, God initiates through angels or directly through Jesus a clear challenge to consider the real problem behind the uncertainty. Listen to these loving rebukes well. God reaches out again in love to meet us at our point of confusion and doubt. He does this by challenging our assumptions.

- Perplexed? You are looking for the wrong thing in the wrong place! 5-6
- Confused? You are slow to believe God and foolish! 25
- Doubting? You are not looking closely at Jesus Christ! 38-40

3. Listen to God's words for understanding and confidence in your faith. 6-8, 27, 44-46

Note that in each story of distressed followers, the key to change from despair to hope comes from being connected to God's words. Scripture is exposed as a powerful agent of change in the journey to confident faith in Christ. Asking or telling someone to think and act on what the Bible says, specifically about Jesus, produces unexplainable change of perspective.

- The empty grave completes the mission of the death of Jesus Christ. 6-8

He has been raised by God . . . he was given over, crucified and now raised by God.

God declares his innocence by reversing the verdict of men.
 God confirms mission accomplished by accepting his sacrifice.
 God announces his approval by granting forgiveness of sin.

- The empty grave signifies that Jesus now rules with all authority. 26-27

Jesus said that this would all culminate in his promotion . . . 22:68-69; 23:42-43

Apostolic preaching emphasizes the exaltation of Jesus . . .

Acts 3:12-16

Acts 5:29-32

- The empty grave announces that repentance and forgiveness are available. 44-46

The change of repentance involves turning from your way to Gods way with sorrow over your sin and failures.

The power of forgiveness is God releasing you from the penalty and power of your sin by placing it on Jesus in his death for you.

Acts 4:8-12

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Conclusion

Note the multiple references to a point of awareness expressed by the metaphor of remembering or having eyes opened. 24:8, 31, 45

Each of these confused doubters came to an 'ah ha' moment of understanding their confusion and doubt from God's perspective. The death of Christ and his elevation to a position of authority over all things becomes the source of certain hope as the scriptures are understood and believed.

You need help from God through his words and Spirit to solve your doubt, uncertainty and unbelief. Ask God to open your eyes as you listen to and learn about Jesus through God's words, the Bible. (cmp L 9:45; 18:34)

Jesus crucifixion and resurrection are the result of God's plan to lovingly rescue people from sin that has been presented throughout the Bible. Because God carries out his plans and promises in Jesus, you can trust him with certainty. What he promises, he will do. Trust him with confidence for the complexities and shortcomings of your life.

Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.