

BaptistWay Bible Series for Easter: Believing in the resurrected Jesus

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Believing in the resurrected Jesus

- Luke 24:1-12; 36-43

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In each of the first three Gospels, Jesus had predicted it from the time Peter first confessed him as the Christ. In the Gospel of John, Jesus alluded to it from very early in his confrontation with the Pharisees.

The disciples seemingly hung on every word Jesus spoke. But that did not mean they understood everything he said. In fact, when everything finally occurred as Jesus predicted, the disciples' disbelief proved they were unprepared for it.

We are speaking, of course, about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We often are quick to judge the disciples for their disbelief and lack of understanding. Who hasn't criticized the disciples, possibly even with the phrase, "If I had been there, I would have ..."? Even Jesus occasionally rebuked the disciples. Yet, their initial disbelief serves for us today as one

of the “many convincing proofs” that Jesus was raised from the dead.



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Luke 24 tells of the disciples’ journey from disbelief (v. 11), to disbelief mixed with “joy and amazement” (v. 41), to Jesus convincing them of his resurrection (vv. 45-46). Their journey serves to encourage our own belief in the resurrection. This chapter offers several proofs of Jesus’ resurrection.

Proof 1: The empty tomb (vv. 1-3)

It was the first day of the week (Sunday) and a number of women went to the tomb to pour spices on the body of Jesus. Already we see they did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead. If they had, perhaps they and the disciples would have stayed at the tomb to await the resurrection, though the guards placed there at the request of the scribes and Pharisees might have been a deterrent (Matthew 27:62-66).

Instead, the women went to the tomb and the disciples were huddled together somewhere else. Upon their arrival, the women found the stone to the tomb already rolled away. Missing when they entered, however, was the body of Jesus.

Proof 2: Testimony of the “two men” (vv. 4-8)

Immediately, they were perplexed, wondering what this could mean. They soon found out what had happened. While the women were in the tomb, two men in gleaming appearance stood before the women. The men tried to calm the women’s fear and assured them with the words, “He is not here; he has risen.” To validate this claim, the men reminded the women Jesus had predicted he would be crucified and be raised from the dead. They did remember now.

Proof 3: The testimony of the women (vv. 9-12)

The women then returned to where the disciples and others were and reported what they had experienced. Despite the report coming from several individuals, the disciples did not believe. Verse 11 states they did not believe “because their words seemed to them like nonsense.”

It often has been rightly pointed out that women being the first witnesses really serves as strong support for the resurrection of Jesus. The testimony of women was not admissible in court. If that was the case, why did not the Gospel writers suppress this? They did not because what the women said was true.

While disbelief was the general attitude, Peter did not simply disbelieve; he went to find out for himself. All he saw was the empty tomb and some strips of linen.

Proof 4: Appearance on the road to Emmaus (vv. 13-32)

Later, two who had been among the group earlier in the day began to make their way toward Emmaus. While they were talking to each other about

what had happened, Jesus appeared among them, but they did not recognize him. He asked them what they were talking about. In their sadness, they were amazed at how he could not know.

After Jesus heard their story, he rebuked them for their disbelief and proceeded to show them how the Old Testament had predicted the events. At their invitation, Jesus shared a meal with them. As soon as he broke the bread, they recognized him; and no sooner did they recognize him than he left their presence.

Proof 5: The testimony of the two on the road to Emmaus (vv. 33-35)

The two then immediately departed for Jerusalem and appeared before the disciples. They reported, in confirmation of the earlier testimony, that Jesus was risen. They had seen for themselves.

Proof 6: Appearance before the disciples (vv. 36-43)

While these witnesses were sharing with the disciples, Jesus himself appeared in their midst. Those present were frightened, thinking he was a ghost. But this was no ghost, or even an image of Jesus. Jesus offered more proof of his bodily resurrection. He invited them to observe his hands and feet, the places bearing the marks of his wounds from the cross. Then he invited them to touch him. After all, a ghost does not have flesh and blood.

Then, as if that were not enough, and recognizing that despite their joy and amazement, the disciples did not believe, Jesus then asked for some food to eat. He ate the fish presented to him. Jesus reminded them of his own predictions and those of the Old Testament that these things had to take place.

Jesus did not swoon. His appearances were not a hallucination or shared vision. The women did not mistakenly arrive at the wrong tomb. The body was not stolen. The disciples did not make up the whole thing.

The evidence leads to one conclusion: Jesus rose, bodily, fully.

The disciples were convinced of it.

Discussion questions

- What would it have taken for you to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
- What finally did convince you to believe in the resurrection?
- What would you consider convincing proof of the resurrection?
- How do you respond to those who question the reality of the resurrection?

