

Easter Day KNBC

Introduction

Just in case you've forgotten ... it's Easter Day; when we celebrate that wonderful time when Jesus rose from the grave defeating sin and death in one fell swoop. To me this is the greatest day in the Christian calendar since it brought forth our risen Lord and Saviour.

If you have been a Christian for any length of time then I'm sure you know the story by now. If you are a new Christian then it may help to hear the story for only the first or second time; and if you are not yet a Christian then maybe this narrative in Luke's gospel will help you as you seek to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

I want us all to look at [Luke 24:1-49](#), a long passage that covers all that happened on that first Easter Day; from sunrise to sunset. It was a long day and just reading these verses may well leave us breathless as we contemplate all that happened and all that Luke has to say.

Whilst I want to look in detail of some of what Luke says, it may be useful to think quickly about what had been happening. In [24:36-49](#) the disciples had gathered together in the Upper Room to discuss what had happened to their friends on the Emmaus Road. Without realising it these two disciples had met the Lord and it was during that brief encounter that Jesus had explained to these two curious travellers all about Himself from the Scriptures. As the disciples talked about this strange event just imagine being in that Upper Room with them; you are sad, bewildered, scared. Suddenly and without warning Jesus is there in their midst. The doors were locked and yet He was able to be with them. How do you feel now? Even more scared and bewildered? Just as you try and gather your thoughts Jesus says quite calmly, "*Peace be with you.*" The ever perceptive Christ knew exactly how His disciples felt at that moment, hence His comforting remark.

That's the quick synopsis of what happened in that Upper Room. Now let's look at some of the events that made up that fabulous day.

The Gospels

When we look at the details of that resurrection day in the Gospels; particularly Matthew, Mark and Luke; we see some subtle differences in how each Apostle tells the story. That's probably because

none of these details were written down extemporaneously but some time after they happened and they relied on people's memories and personal experiences. Having said that, when we look closely we can see that there aren't too many differences and they do all carry the same basic details. The most important detail comes in the words of the one or two young men who the women met at the tomb when those men told them in [Luke 24:6](#), "*He is not here; he has risen!*" Nothing can be clearer than that.

The Women

It's fascinating to see that it is the women in Jesus' life who rose the earliest to visit the tomb and there is no mention of their male companions until some while later in the story. I suspect that there may be a couple of reasons for that. Firstly, the men may not have all been in one place having fled the area in fear for their own lives. Secondly, it's quite possible that the women had no such fears and felt that they could move around far more easily and without too much hindrance.

We know from [Luke 24:1](#) that the first action on the third day took place "*very early in the morning*" probably as soon as the sun came up. It was so early that it's more than likely that the women would have prepared everything they needed before dawn so as to be ready to make their way to the tomb as soon as it was daylight; I can only assume that they needed the daylight to be able to find their way. It's also very likely that whilst the tomb was a little way away they may have known where it was as a result of having followed the men who carried Jesus' body there late on Friday. Jewish custom said that a person had to be buried before the sun went down on the day they died and so having been taken down from the cross, Jesus was taken to the tomb very quickly in order to comply with that command. So hurried were the preparations for His burial that there had only been time to wrap His body in cloths. The women understood this but were nonetheless worried since another custom was to anoint the body with spices and perfume as a sign of love, devotion and respect for the deceased. Such a task could not be hurried and so they may have decided to attend to it later.

I wonder how the women felt as they approached the tomb. Would they have been sad and downhearted at the loss of their friend? Would they have been fearful about what they would find? As they walked along towards the tomb their biggest

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concern seems to have been the huge stone that had been rolled across the entrance; how were they going to move it? They may also have known that after the stone had been rolled across the entrance it had been sealed and a guard set up to keep watch lest any attempt be made to tamper with or steal Jesus' body. Why place a guard at a tomb of someone Who had been crucified as a terrorist? Why would the authorities be so concerned about someone Who had just been executed? We know from [Matthew 27:62-66](#) that the Chief Priests and the Pharisees were worried about something that Jesus had said. They remembered that Jesus had made it clear that He would rise from the grave on the third day. Their big concern now was that some of his supporters may come during the night, steal the body and then claim that what Jesus had said would happen had actually happened. The Pharisees simply couldn't afford to take that risk. However, as always, they failed to take into account the power of God.

As the women approached the tomb some of their worries were eased when, according to [Luke 24](#) and [Mark 16](#), they saw that the stone had been rolled away. [Matthew 28](#) tells us that following a violent earthquake an angel appeared and moved away the stone. Whichever story you follow, the fact is that the stone had been moved and the women were able to continue with their task unhindered. In the account in [Luke 24](#) we read that having found the stone rolled away, the women entered the tomb but didn't find Jesus' body. That must have been a disappointing but also very worrying moment for them; after all, who expects to have seen someone placed in a tomb and yet only a few hours later find that their body has gone; especially as the stone at the entrance to the tomb had been sealed. As they stood and pondered this problem, "*suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them*" ([24:4](#)). Matthew in [Matthew 28:5](#) refers to an angel appearing and saying to them "*Do not be afraid...*" I would suggest that it is quite possible that these two men to whom Luke refers were in fact angels. Whilst the men didn't come out with that famous phrase of reassurance, the women were still frightened and bowed down to the ground. These men proceeded to ask a very pertinent question: "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*" ([24:5b](#)). It is then that the men confirmed the amazing news that "*He is not here; he has risen!*" ([24:6a](#)). The two men reminded the women of what Jesus had told them when they had been with Him in Galilee. In just a few words they outlined the gospel: the Son of Man was to be handed over to

sinners; He was to be crucified and on the third day rise again; lest there be any doubt, that is He would rise from the dead. It was only then that the women remembered Jesus' words. We all need reminding from time to time don't we? We tend to forget the very basics of our faith; we may remember some of the stories of Jesus healing people and doing things like changing water into wine and restoring the sight of a blind man, but we forget that He came to die to pay the price for our sins, to die on the cross of Calvary as the price to be paid for those sins, and then to rise from the grave and walk the earth again.

We don't hear any more about these men but we do read that the women went back to find the disciples and tell them all that happened. As I mentioned earlier, there are subtle differences in the accounts of events on that morning and it is Luke who seems to provide the fullest list of the women involved. We read that there was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and "*others with them*". Mark mentions a woman by the name of Salome as also being present ([Mark 16:1](#)).

How do you suppose the women felt at that moment? They had found the tomb to be empty and they had spoken to two men who may well have been angels? Is it possible that their hearts were pounding with all that had happened in that short space of time? No matter, since despite their own concerns they rushed off to find the men to share their news with them and joyfully tell the eleven and "*all the others*" what they had seen and heard. Luke doesn't mince his words when he says, "*...they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense*" ([Luke 24:11](#)). That's what happens today isn't it? People hear the gospel story but refuse to accept it; they refuse to accept that the Son of God died for them and then rose from the grave. Quite simply far too many people find the whole story to be nonsense and utterly impossible. However, thanks to the Holy Spirit working in them that alleged nonsense story is soon understood and becomes the story of the ultimate truth; Jesus rose from the grave, defeated death and is alive today.

It is interesting to see that despite being doubtful about what he had been told, Luke tells us that it was Peter who "*got up and ran to the tomb*" ([Luke 24:12a](#)). He looked inside the tomb and saw for himself that it was indeed empty. I wonder what he truly felt as "*he went away, wondering to himself what had happened*" ([Luke 24:12b](#)) Remember that it was Peter who had, on three separate occasions,

denied knowing Jesus and I suspect that that betrayal was weighing heavily on his heart. If there was a chance, even if only a slim chance, that Jesus was alive then perhaps he had a chance of redemption.

Emmaus Road

Later on the same day two disciples were walking to Emmaus from Jerusalem when they were joined by a stranger. It seems that this stranger had no idea of what had been happening and Jerusalem and was quite happy for the disciples to explain the events to Him. Having explained these events, the stranger explained to them all about Jesus from the Scriptures, "... *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself*" (Luke 24:27).

No sooner had their eyes been opened and they recognised Jesus, He left them. They then discussed what had just happened and agreed, "*Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened up the Scriptures to us?*" (Luke 24:32). Do our hearts burn when we hear Scripture read and expounded or does it just wash over us? These disciples were in the presence of the Lord just as we are and as a result they felt differently and their hearts had been set afire for Him.

The Men

Whilst all the women were investigating the tomb, most of the men were in hiding. We have no idea where they had been but when the women found them we know that they were all together since Luke tells us that the women "*told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others*" (Luke 24:9). When the story moves on to Luke 24:36-49 we find the men together again. Whilst Luke doesn't make it clear where they had been, John tells us that, "*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews ...*" (John 20:19). As they chatted together about what the women had told them, "*Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'*" (Luke 24:36b). The big question is: did Jesus open the doors of the room or did He enter in a miraculous fashion? How would you have felt had you been there? These men had seen Jesus die on the cross; they had seen His tomb; now they were in a locked Upper Room and yet here was Jesus standing in their midst. I think Luke's comment in Luke 24:37 is one of the greatest

understatements ever. In that verse he simply says, "*They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost!*" Jesus was and still is the most perceptive of people and He knew what the disciples were thinking and feeling. He simply said to them, "*Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?*" (Luke 24:38). They hadn't believed the women when they were told that Jesus had risen and now their faces and reactions must have confirmed that doubt as Jesus stood in their midst. Jesus quietly reassured them that it was Him and showed them His hands and feet which were, of course, scarred by the nails that had been driven through them; the wounds would no doubt have still been fresh and raw. Jesus even invited them to touch and feel Him; you certainly can't do that to a ghost. Not too many hours earlier Jesus had been flogged and tortured and then hung on a cross to die. He had suffered untold agonies, and yet, here He was standing in front of them; very recognisable with no apparent disfigurement. Most importantly we should notice that Jesus didn't reject their approach nor was He concerned about them touching Him. Suggesting that the disciples could touch Him is in sharp contrast to what He is reported to have told Mary at the tomb. On that occasion He said to her, "*Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.*" (John 20:17). I have no explanation for that other than to suggest that Jesus was at that stage both body and spirit. He had after all entered a locked room! Jesus then went on to ask for some food which again is something that you wouldn't expect a ghost to do! I find it fascinating that even though Jesus was standing right there in front of them, the disciples "*still did not believe it because of joy and amazement*" (Luke 24:41).

Remember that these disciples had been with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry; they had seen Him perform any number of miracles; and they had heard Him preach and teach about the coming kingdom of God. Now they could see Him and touch Him even after His crucifixion and still they struggled to believe. I mentioned a moment ago that Jesus was very perceptive and He demonstrated that again by explaining everything to them; again!

That phrase at the beginning of Luke 24:45, "*he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*" is very similar to what we read in connection with the two disciples meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27. Luke tells us, "*And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*" We all need the

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Lord to open our minds and explain Scripture to us don't we. On this occasion Jesus explained to His disciples all that Scripture had to say about Him by looking at "*the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms*" (Luke 24:44b). Understanding Scripture isn't always easy and we all need guidance as to what it is saying to us. Consequently we all need our hearts and minds opened to the many truths and prophecies that are contained within Scripture so that we can gain a clearer understanding of Jesus and His ministry. The disciples on both occasions had Jesus Himself to explain it all. Today we have the presence of the Holy Spirit Who is with us to help us in so many ways, including opening up Scripture for us.

The Promise

Luke ends His account of the post resurrection events by quoting the words of Jesus' promise in the final verse of this gospel: "*I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high*" (Luke 24:49). If the disciples weren't already confused enough, I suspect that that promise may have left them even more confused. What was Jesus talking about? We have only to wait to read Acts 1 where Luke continues his narrative to discover the full details of that promise whilst the disciples had to wait 40 days!

Conclusion

Wow; what a story; except it is not fiction but is a true story! Some of the precise details may vary slightly between the gospels but the main story is absolutely true. On Good Friday Jesus was arrested, flogged and tortured before being nailed to a rough wooden cross. He hung there until He died before being taken down to be gently placed into a freshly hewn tomb. On the third day when the women went to anoint His body with perfumes and spices, something which hadn't been done earlier because of lack of time, they found His tomb empty.

As the women looked at this and wondered what had happened they were confronted by either an angel, two men wearing bright white clothing or by Jesus Himself depending on which gospel you read. Regardless of precisely Who it was, they were told that Jesus had risen just as He had said He would and they were told to go and tell the disciples.

Upon hearing this momentous news, the men simply didn't believe the women. A little while later,

as they discussed what might have happened; Jesus appeared in their midst. They still didn't believe despite Jesus suggesting that they could touch Him and despite Him asking for some food. In order to try and help them Jesus explained from Scripture what had just happened and that He was indeed the Messiah. Rather interestingly we still don't read that the disciples now believed.

Do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus died and rose again on the third day? He did all that so that everyone who accepts Him as Lord and Saviour could be forgiven their sins. The price to be paid for sin is death and by dying on the cross Jesus paid that price for us. If you don't already believe that then I respectfully suggest that you think very carefully about this amazing story and accept Jesus into your hearts as your Saviour at the earliest opportunity.