

Suggested Reading

A Recommended Reading

Mark	1:1	The Beginning of the Gospel.
Mark	5:1-20	Geresene Demoniac
Mark	8:27-30	Peter's faith.
Mark	15:21-41	The Death of Jesus
Matthew	1:18-25	The Birth of Jesus
Matthew	5:3-12	The Beatitudes
Matthew	27:11-54	The Death of Jesus
Luke	2:1-20	The Birth of Jesus
Luke	15:1-10	The Lost Sheep/Lost Coin
Luke	23:33-49	The Death of Jesus
Luke	24:13-35	The Road to Emmaus

B Further Reading

The Catechism of the Catholic Church
Paragraphs 422-682. **(430-455; 561-570)**

Prayer

God of our forefathers and Lord of creation,
you have made us in your image.
As we have listened to the word of God;
may its power renew us,
and its grace refashion us,
so that in time we may assume the full likeness of Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.
(From the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.)

PFP v7/2026

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Henley on Thames



The Resurrection and the Ascension

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Luke 23:56b 24:53



Luke has undertaken to write an account of the events handed down by 'eyewitnesses and servants of the word' (Lk 1:2). The resurrection of Jesus is the heart of this message. Together with the ascension it becomes the structural point within Luke's writings. The ascension is the hinge which forms the link between the age of Jesus and the age of the Church. These events mark the end of the Gospel, but the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles.

The beginning and the end of each Gospel form 'bookends', which echo the major themes of the Gospel. At the beginning they are introduced, at the end they are brought to their climax. For example, the position of Jerusalem is central for Luke. The Gospel begins in the Temple and ends in the Temple, while Jerusalem is also the climax of the Gospel but the beginning of the Acts

of the Apostles. In Acts, the Gospel will be proclaimed in Jerusalem and from there to the ends of the earth.

There are four scenes within this section of the Gospel: the empty tomb. (Lk 24:1-12). The road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). The appearance of the Risen Christ (Lk 24:36-49). The Ascension. (Lk 24:50-53).

The Empty Tomb.

'On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared' (Lk 24,1). ... 'They found ...' (x9 = Lk 24, 1-9) Who are they? We might ask?

1. We can wait for Luke to tell us at verse 10: *'The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Mary the mother of James. And the other women with them told the Apostles'*
2. Or we can look back using the spices as a hint = *'The women who had come from Galilee with Jesus followed behind and saw the tomb and how the body had been laid. They went back and prepared spices and ointments. (Lk 23:55)*

Of course, both answers are correct; but the best answer is number two. This is because the women and the spices are the link which unites the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

'They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but on entering they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus'. (Lk 24:4) It is only after they have entered the Tomb and standing 'perplexed' that this sign is interpreted for them. The Angels proclaim the Easter message, 'he is not here; he has been raised up (Lk 24:6); just as they proclaimed the Christmas message 'a Saviour has been born to you; who is Christ the Lord.' (Lk 2:11). While the women's eyesight confirms that Jesus is not there; only their faith can interpret these events. This message is essentially a revelation from God.

The women return to tell the eleven and the others, who do not believe. Luke contrasts the message of the women and the obstinacy of the disciples. Peter visits the Tomb. He can see the linen cloths and confirm that it is empty, but his amazement does not lead us to conclude that Peter believed at this point. The rest on the chapter is devoted to appearances

Next Week

Jesus Christ, Messiah, Son of God.

Next week we conclude our course on the Synoptic Gospels by considering the person of Jesus. St Jerome famously coined the phrase; *'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.'* We may consider this from the opposite pole. Our knowledge of the Gospels enhances our knowledge of Christ. Has your image of Jesus changed after studying the Gospels?

What have we learnt? What conclusions can we draw? The Gospels are not biographies of Jesus; but they do present us with characteristics of his ministry.

Each evangelist has set before us his own concerns. Can we talk of the Jesus of Mark, or Matthew's Jesus or Luke's Jesus? Which image of Jesus arising from the Gospel inspires you most? Which Gospel did you enjoy reading above the others?

Try to examine the titles of Jesus which you will find explained in the New Catechism. How are they used throughout the Gospels? What do they mean for us?

Is there any other feature, figure, personality or group within the Gospel which have been revealed to you in a different light by your examination? Is this change positive or negative?

Resurrection Appearances



of the risen Jesus which overcome the disbelief of the eleven and the others.

The road to Emmaus

The Road to Emmaus is a masterpiece of Luke's style and the longest of the appearance stories in the Gospels. It is replete with Luke's themes which we find throughout the Gospel. Two disciples of Jesus are on a journey to Emmaus. We should recall the theme of a journey throughout the Gospel, which is a symbol of discipleship. In the Gospel and Acts, journeys are important occasions for teaching and evangelisation.

This is a recognition story, which shares similar features with the story of the appearance to Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John (Jn 20,1-18). Jesus appears unknown to those about them. There is a cognitive block: they cannot recognise him. This allows irony, (Mary considers him the Gardener, the disciples speak of him as a prophet). This in turn allows instruction and teaching. Finally, startling recognition occurs (for Mary, Jesus' voice) *'their eyes were opened and they recognised him, ... in the breaking of bread'* (Lk 24, 32,35). Jesus' action of breaking bread is as familiar as his voice or his accent.

This story is Chiastic = from the Greek word chi =X = because it is linked and mirrors itself:

While the central event (often the odd number) is the hinge on which is rests

A	From Jerusalem (v13)	A'	To Jerusalem (v32)
B	Talking together (v13)	B'	Talking together (v31)
C	Jesus came up (v15)	C'	Jesus vanished (v31)
D	Recognised him in the breaking of Bread (v31)		

Or:

A	From Jerusalem (v13)
B	Talking together (v13)
C	Jesus came up (v15)
D.	Recognised him in the breaking of Bread (v31)
C'	Jesus vanished (v31)
B'	Talking together (v31)
A'	To Jerusalem (v32)

The Resurrection Appearances remind us that there is no certainty that one could know Jesus until the scriptures were explained and the Eucharist celebrated. Luke's readers have the same opportunities of recognising the presence of the risen Lord as earlier generations. It is a matter of encountering the risen Jesus with faith. This question has been at the heart of each appearance. This is particularly true of the next passage.

The appearance of the Risen Christ

The two disciples leave Emmaus and hurry back to Jerusalem to tell their story. While still speaking of their experiences on the road the risen Jesus appears in their midst. His greeting of peace fulfils the promise at the beginning of the Gospel related by the angels to the shepherds. (Lk 2:14)

This greeting only leads to agitation. Jesus reveals the bodily nature of the Resurrection. There is a continuity in the risen life of Jesus but also a radical difference. AS with the disciples on the road, so here, Jesus instructs them and opens their minds to understand the scriptures. Once more the mystery of the Resurrection is primarily a revelation from God.

They are commissioned as witnesses to the Resurrection to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins *'to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem'*. (Lk 24:47) This mission is intimately linked with their preaching about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. They will be given *'the gift of the Father'* = the Holy Spirit; who is the source and strength of this mission.

The Ascension.

The Ascension of Jesus marks the end of the Gospel and the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. The narration of the Resurrection appearances could lead one to conclude that all of these events took place on Easter Sunday. The Acts of the Apostles speaks of other appearances and the ascension of Jesus forty days after the Resurrection. (Acts 1:3)

Jesus leads the disciples outside the city and blesses them. The disciples in their turn worship him. Jesus concludes his journey from Galilee which brings him to heaven.

The disciples return to Jerusalem where they praise God in the Temple. Luke's Gospel ends with praise of God. The Gospel begins and

ends in the Temple, which is a continuity with what has gone before, as well as the beginning of a new age; the age of the Church.

IN BRIEF

656 *Faith in the Resurrection has as its object an event which is historically attested to by the disciples, who really encountered the Risen One. At the same time, this event is mysteriously transcendent insofar as it is the entry of Christ's humanity into the glory of God.*

657 *The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord.*

658 *Christ, 'the first-born from the dead' (Col 1:18), is the principle of our own resurrection, even now by the justification of our souls (cf. Rom 6:4), and one day by the new life he will impart to our bodies (cf. Rom 8:11).*

665 *Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf. Acts 1:11); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf. Col 3:3).*

666 *Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever.*

667 *Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*