

That You May Know The Certainty

LESSON 26: JESUS'S ASCENSION (LUKE 24:36-53)

On the first day of the week, those who came to Jesus's tomb found the tomb empty. The angel declared He had risen just as He said! After that, Jesus began appearing to some of the disciples, proving that He really had risen from the dead.

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES (LUKE 24:36-43)

24:36. Jesus had appeared to the two men traveling to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31) on the first day of the week, the day Jesus had risen (Luke 24:13). These two disciples then quickly returned to find the apostles (along with other disciples) and explained what had happened (Luke 24:32-35). It was now late at the close of the first day of the week when this gathering took place (in a locked room due to fear of the Jews, John 20:19). As the two men were explaining what happened on the road and when they ate, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst (while they were reclining at the table, Mark 16:14)! He then greeted His disciples with the mention of peace to them (perhaps a standard greeting, Luke 10:5-6). Yet, Jesus's greeting takes on great significance when considering Jesus is the Prince of Peace (bringing peace with God to people in this world, Luke 2:14; Isaiah 9:6-7). Also note that only ten of the apostles were present on this occasion, as Thomas was not there and Jesus appeared to him later (John 20:24-29).

24:37-43. There had apparently been a mix of belief and unbelief among the apostles concerning the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:33-35; Mark 16:14). Now, as Jesus appeared in their midst, they were startled (alarmed) and frightened (terrified). Particularly, they thought they were seeing a ghost (similar to Matthew 14:22-33). Imagine what they must have thought to see Jesus alive after all that had happened to Him, and after what they had done in abandoning Him! Jesus, though, asked why they were troubled and doubted. Perhaps while they believed in theory (Luke 24:33-35), they were in disbelief to see Him present among them in their locked room (Mark 16:14). To dispel their thoughts about seeing a ghost (spirit without a body), Jesus invited them to examine His hands and feet (which bore the markings of the nails that pierced Him during crucifixion, John 20:25, 27). Jesus clearly possessed a physical body – and the

same physical body (flesh and bones) they had witnessed be nailed to the cross (1 John 1:1-4; 4:1-3; 2 John 1:7-11)! They were both amazed and in disbelief due to their joy of seeing Jesus. Then, Jesus further proved His humanity by asking for something to eat, and by eating a piece of broiled fish (some manuscripts add “and some honeycomb”) in their presence. The disciples had been given clear evidence of Jesus's resurrection and they would later even be willing to suffer and die in the proclamation of that message (e.g. book of Acts)!

JESUS INSTRUCTS HIS APOSTLES (LUKE 24:44-49)

24:44-45. Luke does not record many of the events that took place during the time between Jesus's resurrection and ascension to Heaven (40 days, Acts 1:1-3). This included Jesus's appearance to Thomas a week after the events previously described (John 20:24-29), His appearance to seven of His disciples in Galilee (John 21:1-14), His appearance to over 500 people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6), and His appearance to James (1 Corinthians 15:7). Therefore, some or all these words (which appear to have been spoken near the time of His ascension and near Jerusalem, Luke 24:49) must have been said on another occasion besides the day of His resurrection. Luke now records Jesus reminding the apostles that what had happened (e.g. His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection) fulfilled both what He had spoken to them during His ministry (Luke 9:21-22, 44-45; 18:31-34) and the Old Testament Scriptures (divided into three sections of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms). All the Old Testament Scripture pointed to Him and what had happened and was about to happen! Then, Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (by explaining and interpreting the Scriptures to them, Luke 24:27, 32). Previously they had not understood all the events that were happening in light of the Scriptures, but now they were enlightened through this proper explanation (John 12:16; Luke 9:45; 18:34; Acts 17:2-3).

24:46-49. The Scriptures pointed to the Messiah (Christ) suffering and rising from the dead on the third day (Psalm 22; 16:10; Isaiah 53). However, the Scriptures also pointed to what would happen after these things were accomplished by the Messiah (which would involve the apostles). Namely, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed (preached) in the Messiah's name (Jesus of Nazareth) to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem. Thus, the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins under a new

covenant would be preached in the name of Jesus (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Acts 2:37-41; 3:18-20; also involving faith and baptism, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). This message that offered salvation through Jesus would be offered to *all* nations (not just to the Jews, Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:8-9; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21; Hosea 2:23; Romans 1:16; 9:23-29). This message would first be proclaimed in Jerusalem, according to prophecy (Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-8; Acts 2). It would be the specific work of the apostles to serve as witnesses of Jesus's resurrection as they would proclaim this good news of salvation to people throughout the world (Acts 1:8, 21-22; 5:32). Though they had previously been sent on the "Limited Commission" to the lost in Israel (Matthew 10:1-6; Luke 9:1-6), they were now being sent on the "Great Commission" to the lost throughout the entire world (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:4-8)! To help and equip them for this, Jesus would send the apostles what the Father promised (the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who would remind them of what Jesus had taught and bring them into all truth, Luke 3:16; John 14:25-27; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; Acts 1:4-5). They were to stay in the city (Jerusalem) until they were empowered in this way in a short time (Acts 1:4-11).

JESUS ASCENDS TO HEAVEN (LUKE 24:50-53)

24:50-53. Jesus led the disciples out (from Jerusalem) to the vicinity of Bethany, which is on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12). He lifted up His hands and blessed them, then left them while blessing them, being carried up into Heaven (in the clouds, Acts 1:9-11). Upon His ascension, Jesus took His place at the right hand of God as King (Daniel 7:9-11; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:32-36; Hebrews 8:1-6)! Following Jesus's ascension, the disciples worshiped Him. Then, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy (knowing the Savior lives and has been glorified)! They continued praising God in the temple after this for some time (Acts 2:46).

CONCLUSION

Luke had now concluded his account of Jesus's earthly life so that Theophilus and we can know the certainty about the events surrounding Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 1:1-4). This amazing gospel record has shown how God has fulfilled His eternal plan of salvation through Jesus (Ephesians 3:8-11). Furthermore, Luke has prepared the reader for what would happen next whenever this good news of salvation would be spread to the ends of the earth (in the book of Acts)!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Where were the apostles when Jesus appeared to them and what were they doing?

How did the apostles respond when they saw Jesus standing among them?

How did Jesus prove He was not a ghost (spirit without a body)?

What were some of the events that took place between Jesus's resurrection and ascension (many not recorded by Luke)?

What did Jesus help the apostles understand about all that had taken place?

What message would soon be preached, to whom would it be preached, and from where would this message begin?

What did Jesus promise would happen to the apostles?

What was the significance of Jesus's resurrection and how did the apostles respond?

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