

From Facts to Faith

Luke 24:36-49

You've probably heard the concept of "confirmation bias." If you have confirmation bias, you tend to believe information that confirms what you already believe. For example, let's say you believe that left handed people are more intelligent than right handed people. If you meet someone who's brilliant; you're amazed at how they assimilate information and reason through problems. You're so impressed that you ask for the person's signature. When they write with their left hand, you think, "Of course, left handed people are more intelligent." Confirmation bias.

When it came to the resurrection of Jesus, there was a lot of confirmation bias going on, but not in the way we might think. Jesus had repeatedly told His disciples that he would die in Jerusalem and be raised on the third day. But for a variety of reasons, their bias was that Jesus had **not** been raised bodily from the dead.

We read in Luke 24:11 that when the women reported that the tomb was empty and that two angels had told them that Jesus was raised from the dead just as He told them, the disciples thought it was nonsense. A bodily resurrection made no sense to them. Their bias was that when you're crucified on Friday, you aren't alive and well on Sunday.

Today we're going to see in Luke 24:36-49 how Jesus broke through their bias against the resurrection. Jesus was very intent on convincing them of two very specific things about His resurrection: 1) the **fact** of His resurrection (that He was literally raised from the dead), and 2) the **significance** of His resurrection (that it fulfilled God's plan for the ages). These two things rise or fall together; the significance of the resurrection is wholly dependent on whether or not it literally happened.

The Fact of the Resurrection (Luke 24:36-43) The scene is in Jerusalem where Jesus' disciples were gathered on that first Easter evening. They had been talking about the things reported by two men who claimed that they'd talked to the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"

The impression here is that Jesus appeared (as opposed to opening the door and walking in). He gave the common Jewish greeting, "Peace to you!" (*Shalom!*). Verse 37 records:

37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

Their bias was that Jesus was not raised from the dead. It was more plausible to them that they were seeing a spirit (or ghost) who looked like Jesus. What Jesus does next is very significant. He addresses their troubled and doubting hearts, something He had also done the night before He was crucified (John 14:1-11).

38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Jesus was intent on convincing them that He was the same person who had been hanging on the cross. He invited them to see with their eyes and touch with their hands the scars in His hands and feet. Jesus points out that a spirit (which by definition is a being w/o a body) does not have flesh and bones like He did.

40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

Jesus’ resurrected body had (and has!) the scars from the spikes that were driven through His hands and feet. Verse 41 is somewhat humorous to me:

41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”

Was Jesus suddenly hungry and wanted a snack? Highly unlikely. Jesus was eager to prove to them that He wasn’t merely a spirit (which, as we all know, cannot eat real food). We read next:

42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.

The fact that Jesus could “take and eat” a piece of broiled fish meant that He had a real, tangible body that could ingest food. We could speculate all day about the exact nature of Jesus’ resurrected body, but a couple things are clear from this passage. First, there is continuity between His body that hung on the cross and His resurrected body (since He could show them His scars). Second, His resurrected body was tangible given the fact that they could touch Him and He could eat food.

Jesus was very intent on convincing the disciples that the resurrection was a fact: He had literally been raised bodily from the dead. When the Bible speaks of Jesus’ resurrection, it’s not just an inspirational metaphor about “life out of death” or “new beginnings” or “triumph over tragedy.” No, when the Bible speaks of Jesus’ resurrection, it’s saying that He was bodily raised from the dead.

Why does that matter? Why is it not enough that Jesus was a great teacher who gave us a great example to follow? In verses 44-49 Jesus answers that question.

The Significance of the Resurrection (Luke 24:44-49) In these verses Jesus basically says that His resurrection was the last step in God’s predetermined plan (see Acts 2:23) for Him as the unique Son of God. Notice in these verses how Jesus continually connects His life, death, and resurrection with the Hebrew Scriptures.

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

“The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings/Psalms” were the three standard divisions within the Hebrew Scriptures. So Jesus is saying that over the previous three years He had been telling them that He would fulfill everything written about the Messiah in (what we call) the Old Testament.

We have an example of this in Luke 4. Jesus was in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. As was His habit, Jesus stood up and read from a scroll. That day Jesus read from Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. . . liberty to the captives. . . recovery of sight to the blind. . . to set at liberty those who are oppressed. . . to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” He gave the scroll back to the attendant and sat down. With all eyes fixed on Him, Jesus said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” In other words, Jesus was saying, “I am the person Isaiah was talking about! The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Today I have made these proclamations that Isaiah wrote about.” That’s was a bold claim. The people in His hometown were so angry with Him that they tried to throw Him off a cliff.

There are many example of Jesus telling people He was fulfilling the Scriptures. But significantly, even His disciples didn’t understand what He was saying. There’s a sense in which they *couldn’t* understand until He had been raised from the dead. Back in Luke 18, for example, we read that Jesus told them before they went to Jerusalem for the last time that in fulfillment of Scripture He would be mocked, spit upon, flogged, killed and raised from the dead on the third day. But in Luke 18:34 we’re told this:

34 But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Before the resurrection they couldn’t grasp what Jesus was saying; the idea Jesus would exhibit such power and authority during His life, but would be crucified as a criminal was unthinkable; and the idea of a subsequent bodily resurrection was far outside the realm of possibility for them. They couldn’t understand the plain words Jesus was saying. But on that first Easter evening after they’d seen and heard and eaten broiled fish with the risen Christ, they were ready to understand. [This was also the case with the two men on the road to Emmaus - see Luke 24:31.]

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

Jesus supernaturally gave them the capacity to understand the teachings of Scripture. You may be in a situation similar to that of the original disciples. You’ve heard the Scriptures over and over, perhaps for years or perhaps for weeks, but the message about Christ doesn’t make sense to you. “Yeah, I understand the words you’re saying about Jesus, but I don’t quite “get it.”

The good news is that Jesus still opens people’s minds to understand the Scriptures. If you don’t understand the message about Jesus (that we’ve been discussing today and really every week), cry out to God to open your mind, read the Scriptures for yourself,

and talk with people who do understand the message. If you seek with all your heart to understand the Scriptures, God will give you that understanding. Those who ask receive; those who seek find; those who knock have the door opened to them. This message about Jesus is too important to settle for living in confusion.

Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”. . .

46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You won’t find a specific set of Scriptures that use the same phrases that Jesus uses in these two verses. But in various places you find Scriptures that teach that the Messiah will suffer (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), that the Messiah wouldn’t be abandoned in the grave but would live again (Psalm 16:8-11, 110:1), and that the message of forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed to the nations (Isaiah 2:1-4, 49:6).

Notice that Jesus mentions that the message proclaimed included “repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” This means that a response is invited and necessary. Repentance isn’t merely being sorry about your sin; repentance means changing directions. If you’re heading north, repentance involves turning around a heading south. Spiritually, if you repent you turn from sin and self and turn to God in faith. When you do that, you experience forgiveness of sins. God says to you, “Even though you have sinned against Me, I will never make you pay for your sin (because My Son paid your debt on the cross). I accept you as My child.”

That is the message of the gospel that is proclaimed “to all the nations.” The way of Christ was never meant to be limited to one people or one geographic region. Since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the entire world and everyone in it, God loved the whole world so much that He sent His unique Son so that whoever believes in Him wouldn’t perish but would have eternal life.

48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

The book of Acts, which was also written by Luke, describes how Jesus’ disciples received the promised Holy Spirit who empowered them to take this message to the entire known world (see Acts 1:8, 2:32-36, etc.). They went from being troubled and doubting to being bold and confident that Jesus was the Savior of the world. When they spoke about and wrote about Jesus, they were careful to say, “We are witnesses of these things (i.e., we’re not making this up); we saw Jesus crucified and risen from the dead. Repent and believe the gospel for the forgiveness of your sins.” They never would have given their lives to this mission if they weren’t convinced of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Some of you may be familiar with the game called Jenga. You begin by stacking up layers of wooden blocks in an overlapping pattern to form a tower. To play the game you take turns removing a block from somewhere in the stack; you lose the game when you remove a block that causes the rest of the tower to collapse. In the Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is like that block. If you remove the resurrection of Jesus from Christianity, the whole thing collapses. In 1 Corinthians 15:17 Paul said that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless.”

But if Jesus **was** raised from the dead, your faith is priceless. Jesus’ resurrection validates everything He said and did. His resurrection validated everything Jesus had taught about God, about how we should live out lives, about His identity as the Son of God who died as our substitute!

If you’re not yet a believer in Jesus, I would urge you to cry out to God and ask Him to open your mind to understand the Scriptures. Seek God through the Scriptures, praying that He shows you your need for forgiveness and eternal life. When He does, simply turn from your sin and turn to Jesus in faith. And you will enter into life. If you would like to talk with somebody from Faith about these things, click the button where you watch the livestream that says, “I want to learn more about following Jesus” and we will be in touch with you. We’d love to talk with you.

If you are already a believer, allow the fact of the resurrection and the significance of the resurrection give you confidence in your faith. The Scriptures are worthy of your trust because they were written by people who saw firsthand Jesus risen from the dead (or they were close to those who were). Because Jesus is alive, He is still the Good Shepherd who will lead you through this life and into eternity.