

Several excellent books are available on the facts of Christ's resurrection - Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (Send the Light Trust), John Wenham, *Easter Enigma* (Paternoster) and Sir Norman Anderson, *Jesus Christ: the Witness of History* (IVP). The latter also has written a helpful booklet *Evidence for the Resurrection* (IVP).

Weekend

1. In writing his Gospel, Luke was not intending simply to write history. His concern was to record history that relates to salvation. Luke 5:31-32 are key verses. Survey the whole Gospel for examples of Jesus healing the whole person. (See how salvation in Luke is more than a spiritual, religious concept; nor can it be restricted to the physical realm. It involves the whole person.)
2. Pay special attention to this theme of salvation in the passages you have studied this week.
3. The writer, Luke, was apparently a medical doctor (see Colossians 4:14). There are features in the Gospel which may show his special interest - for example, the account of the woman with the haemorrhage (Luke 8:43-47). Have you noticed any such medical features in this Gospel? Try to find some more. He was similarly interested in death - think about some examples. There was the elderly Simeon (2:25-35), the widow of Nain's son (7:11-15), the only daughter (8:40-56), and the dying criminal (23:39-43). Use such examples to explore your own attitude to death. How biblical is it? Christ's death dominates Luke's account. How central is Christ's death to your thinking about the subject? What is a Christ-like response to death?

Notes



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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16th December 2013

Week 16: The Gospel of Luke, 3 (A Historical Study)

Do you remember what we said last week about our 3 weeks of studies in Luke's Gospel?

- Week 14 - we saw how Jesus came **in** to the world
- Week 15 - how he went **on** to Jerusalem
- Week 16 - the narrative surrounding his going **out** of this world.

Chapter headings in your Bible (e.g. 'Signs of the end', RSV/NIV) are not part of the text. They may unduly colour your interpretation of the passage. We need to look at the Gospel text itself to see what Luke is telling us from Jesus' teaching.

Day 1. The servant of history

Luke 21:5-38

1. Read the chapter. What is the context of Jesus' teaching, and what question is he answering (verses 5-7)?
2. Jesus' concern is to relieve the fear of his followers (verse 9) in view of the dreadful things that were to happen within their generation (verse 32). List the things that Jesus says will happen. What warnings does he give? What comfort can be drawn from Jesus' promises?
3. Verses 25-27 clearly reflect the language of the Old Testament. Look up Isaiah 13:10 and Daniel 7:13-14. (If your Bible gives other cross-references, you may like to check them out too.) What were these Old Testament writers saying: (a) about the destruction of cities; (b) about the coming of the 'Son of Man' to the 'Ancient of Days' to receive power?

Note: This passage certainly applied to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD70 - after Jesus had ascended to a position of authority in heaven.

4. Think about Jesus' words in verses 28 and 33. As his prophecy regarding the destruction of the temple was so accurately fulfilled in AD70, what confidence can you have in the words of the Lord of history concerning yet future events?

Day 2. The servant of history

Luke 22:1-38

1. Everything is going according to plan! Judas has negotiated Jesus' betrayal — but Jesus is no powerless pawn in the hands of the Jewish authorities. How is

- his command of the situation seen from verses 7-13 and verses 31-34?
- How does Jesus show, during the Last Supper, that he knows what lies before him? Why was he so certain about this? (Compare verses 22 and 37).
 - Luke shows us the Lord Jesus as the ultimate Servant of the Lord. What are the implications for us of his submission to God's will? (See especially verses 24-30.)
 - The suffering Servant of the Lord is seen prophetically in Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. It is to this Scripture that Jesus referred in verse 37. Think about how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in history as you read Isaiah's words.

Pray about your service in the light of verse 26-27, and ask God for specific ways in which you can serve others today.

Day 3. The man of history

Luke 22:39-71

Probably the genuine humanity of the Lord Jesus is seen as much in these verses as anywhere else in Scripture.

- How does Luke portray the Man Christ Jesus (a) through his prayer on the Mount of Olives, (b) his encounter with his captors, and (c) his response to Peter's denial?
- In verses 63-71, Jesus is mocked and charged with claiming to be the Son of God. What does his response add to your understanding of him?
- Meditate on the picture of Jesus given in this chapter. How does this very human Jesus reveal the authority and compassion of God whom we cannot see? Then respond to God in worship.

Memory verse: So the word of God became a human being and lived among us. We saw his splendour (the splendour as of a father's only son), full of grace and truth (John 1:14, J. B. Phillips).

Day 4. The crux of history

Luke 23:1-56

At the centre of history stands a cross. All of history up to then had been leading to that moment. And from that point, God has invited people to look back to this central, brief period when mankind's separation from God was finally dealt with, and Jesus could cry out -'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'.

Before you begin reading today's chapter, remind yourself that this event - Christ's crucifixion - actually happened in a real place at a real time. It is true.

Pray: that as you read, the reality of Christ's death on your behalf may be impressed on your mind.

- Ask yourself how the events of this chapter, which Luke brings out, illustrate each of these Old Testament chapters:

- Psalm 2:1-2 (compare Acts 4:24-28)
- Psalm 22:6-8,18
- Psalm 69:21
- Isaiah 53:9,11,12
- Amos 8:9
- Psalm 31:5

- What does today's passage reveal about (a) Jesus' innocence, (b) Barabbas' guilt, and (c) the effect of the cross on the lives of the two thieves respectively?

Note: Turn to Acts 2:22-24 and see how the early church had already begun to look back to the cross.

- How central is the event of the cross in your life?

Memory verse: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21, RSV).

"There lies beneath its shadow, but at the farther side,
The darkness of an awful grave that gapes both deep and wide;
And there between us stands the cross, two arms outstretched to save;
Like a watchman set to guard the way from that eternal grave."
(Beneath the cross of Jesus - a hymn by Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane (1830-1869).)

Day 5. The turning point of history

Luke 24:1-53

What would it need to convince you that someone had risen from death? Read through the chapter and let the *facts* hit you.

- From verse 11 it is clear that the disciples were less than convinced by the women's story! Why were the women convinced by the angel's explanation of the empty tomb?
- What parts did the word of Christ and the evidence of their own eyes have in convincing Cleopas and his companion that Jesus was alive?
- How did Jesus convince his friends that his resurrection was real - and that what they were seeing was in fulfilment of the Scriptures?
- In what way are we 'witnesses of these things' (verse 48, NIV)? Why does it matter that the resurrection is an actual event in history?

The resurrection of Jesus is the turning point of history - and the turning point of lives! (Did you notice how the realization of the fact of the resurrection caused people to change radically?)

Aim to share the facts of the resurrection - as you find them in the Bible - today, and pray that they will cause people you know to turn round (see Acts 17:30-31).