

Luke 24, Announcing the Lord's Resurrection

Overview¹

Luke 24 devotes more verses to the resurrection than any other gospel (Table 1, chart).² It reports four different announcements of the Easter message:

- v.7 to the women at the tomb;
- v.26 to Cleopas and another walking to Emmaus;
- vv.46-47 to the disciples in Jerusalem;
- vv. 50-53, to the disciples in Bethany.

Today, we trace these four announcements. In each case, note progression (Table 2, chart) in

- the hearers,
- the announcer,
- the authority behind the announcement, and
- the message itself.

1-12, In the Garden

Hearers: v.10

Luke 23:55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. 24:1

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. ... 10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.—The first two of these women formed part of the Lord's support team in Luke 8 (chart):

Luke 8:1 ... he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, 2 And certain women,

	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
Angel at the tomb	8	8	12	10
To the women	2	2		8
Road to Emmaus		2	23	
Upper Room, Easter		1	14	5
U.R., Thomas				6
Commission in Galilee	5			22
Ascension day		4	4+	
Total Verses	15	17	53	51

Table 1: Verses devoted to the resurrection in each gospel

	In the Garden 24:1-12	Road to Emmaus 24:13-35	Upper Room 24:36-49	Bethany 24:50-53 Ac 1:4-12
Hearers	Women	Cleopas and friend	The disciples	The disciples
Announcer	Angel	The Lord, but hidden	The Lord revealed	The Lord
Authority	The words of the Lord Jesus	The scriptures	Their personal observation	The Lord himself
Message	The facts of the crucifixion	The Messiah must die and be glorified	The message, and their role	Blessing

Table 2: Comparing the Four Announcements

¹ This is a revision of a study originally presented on April 9, 1993.

² "4+" for Luke on Ascension Day reflects the additional space devoted to that day in Acts 1.

which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, **Mary called Magdalene**, out of whom went seven devils, 3 And **Joanna** the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Mary Magdalene is probably Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus. She was a prodigal, brought back to her family by her encounter with Christ in Galilee (Luke 7:37-50), when she anointed his feet with ointment, an act she repeated in John 12:1-8.

Joanna, wife of Herod's steward. Among believers, there are "not many noble" (1 Cor 1:26), but she was one, and supported the Lord.

Mary the mother of James is identified as the mother of one of the apostles. James is probably not the brother of John, one of the sons of Zebedee, otherwise both would be mentioned, but the other James, the son of Alphaeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13).

The first witnesses were the women who had come to anoint the Lord. While the men were huddled in fear, the women were ready to risk abuse at the hands of the Jews and the Romans in order to demonstrate their devotion to the Lord.

Announcer: 4

Luke 24:4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:—The angels bring the message, but appear to them as men. In bringing people to faith, the Lord does not start by appearing directly to them himself. He sends his messengers. We will come back to this principle at the end of our study.

Authority: 6

Luke 24:6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,—The authority for the claim is what Jesus said during his earthly ministry.

Message: 7

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.—The title "son of Man" emphasizes the humanity of our Lord. Nothing in this announcement presents him to them as more than a man.

The message has three points, which he had often declared to them. None of these would appear unprecedented or far out of human experience.

1. his betrayal: a common human experience.
2. his crucifixion: certainly inappropriate for one who had no sin, but still very human.
3. his resurrection: rare, but not unknown. They had seen the Lord raise Lazarus (John 11), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), and would recall the raising of the Shunammite's son by Elisha.

To understand Easter, we must know that a good man once was betrayed by a friend, died an undeserved criminal death, and rose the third day. If we omit this historical emphasis, we shall be wrong. But we are equally wrong if we stop there, and Luke goes on.

13-35, On the Road to Emmaus

Hearers: 18

Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. **14** And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ... **18** And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas —This is the same person as Cleophas³ the husband of Mary the mother of James:

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of **Cleophas**, and Mary Magdalene.

The men finally get the point, though slower than the women!

Announcer: 15-16

Luke 24:15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. **16** But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.—Jesus himself brings the message, but hides his identity from them.

Authority: 25, 27

Luke 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that **the prophets** have spoken: ... **27** And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all **the scriptures** the things concerning himself.—The authority now advances to the scriptures. Note that the appeal to Scripture comes *after* the appeal to the words of Jesus. First we respond to him; then we are open to the Scriptures. Only when the Spirit of Jesus has touched someone's heart is that person open to the written Word.

Message: v.26

Lk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?—The Lord moves their gaze beyond the man to “the Christ” (article in Greek), the promised Messiah. He makes two points: to satisfy the scriptures, the Messiah must both “suffer these things” (betrayal and death), and “enter into his glory.” The latter expression refers not just to resurrection, but to the exaltation promised in the prophets:

Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. **14** And there was given him dominion, and **glory**, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Glory is an attribute of deity:

Isa. 42:8 I [am] the LORD: that [is] my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

3 He is thus the father of James the son of Alphaeus. Edersheim, *Life and Times*, II.603 n 1: “Alphæus and Clopas are the same name. The first occurs in the Babylon Talmud as Ilphai, or Ilpha (אִילפָּא), as in R. hash. 17 b, and often; the other in the Jerusalem Talmud as Chilphai (חִילפִּי), as for ex. in Jer. B. Kama 7 a.”

The Jews looked forward to Messiah's glory, but neglected the suffering. Here the Lord exhorts his disciples to recognize the scriptural nature of both.

The first announcement focused on the humanity of Jesus. We must not stop with the physical resurrection of a man. This is a special man: the man chosen of God to deliver his people, one who shares the very glory of God. If v.7 shows the "son of Man," here we see the "son of God."

36-49, In Jerusalem

Hearers, 33

Luke 24:33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,—"The eleven" (v.33) is shorthand for "the disciples," since John's record shows that Thomas was not with them at this point. But there are more in the room ("them that were with them"), and now the two from Emmaus arrive.

Announcer: 36

Luke 24:36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.—Again the Lord Jesus is the speaker. This time they recognize him, but have to be persuaded that he is physical.

Authority, 39-43

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. ... 43 And he took it, and did eat before them. ... 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,—From "believe Jesus" (the message of the angels) through "believe the Scriptures" (the message on the road to Emmaus) he brings them to "believe what you see and understand." Our senses are a bad place to start (chart):

2 Cor. 5:7 We walk by faith, not by sight

but an excellent place to end up:

John 11:40 If you would believe, you should see the glory of God

He must "open their understanding" before it becomes a reliable channel for knowledge.

Message: 46-49

As on the road to Emmaus, the Risen One is presented as "the Christ" (again with the article), the promised Messiah. The message has four points.

Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:—First, he repeats the historical events of his death and resurrection (which were presented to the women by the angels in v. 7)

Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.—Second, he echoes the message that he preached during his earthly ministry, following the example of John the Baptist (Matt 3:2):

Matt. 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The alignment with v. 47 with “repent” is clear. “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” in Matt 4:17 corresponds with the command to “preach in his name,” upon his authority. The promised king is now ascended, and offers pardon to all who will submit to his rule:

2Cor. 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.—Third, he reminds them of the simple fact that they are witnesses. This will be subtly modified in the fourth announcement.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.—Fourth, he promises that he will empower them by his Spirit.

Having led them to understand the fact of the resurrection in the first announcement and its meaning in the second, the Lord now involves them in the Easter message. They are witnesses to his physical resurrection. The final announcement will empower them to use that unique qualification.

50-53, in Bethany

Luke 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

Hearers, Announcer

The same group is the same one described in the upper room in vv. 36-49, though Luke will later tell us that this event is nearly six weeks later:

Acts 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them **forty days**, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Authority

“He led them out.” They are under the direct leadership of the Lord himself, and as Acts describes, once they receive the Spirit, they are directed by him continually.

Message

“He blessed them.” Luke records his words in more detail in Acts 1:

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Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The blessing of Luke 24:50 is the promise of power through the Spirit, and the honor of representing him.

Contrast “ye shall be witnesses unto me” with “ye are witnesses of these things” in Luke 24:48. The earlier sentence is a statement of fact. This one has more the sense of a command. They are to carry out their mission as representatives of his kingdom. (See Note)

This was the distinctive role of the apostles, articulated when they chose one to replace Judas:

Acts 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained **to be a witness with us of his resurrection.**

A central detail of Paul's claim to be an apostle is that he saw the risen Christ:

1Cor. 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? **have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?** are not ye my work in the Lord?

The resurrection is at the heart of the gospel message. Every presentation of the gospel recorded by Paul includes it. This focus on the resurrection is important.

Rom 4:24 Jesus our Lord ... 25 Who was delivered for [because of] our offences, and was raised again for [because of] our justification.

The death of Christ shows how terrible and powerful our sins are, but offers us no assurance that they are gone. Only by rising from the dead did our Savior prove that our sins are gone.

Recall in Luke 24:4 that the first announcers were the angels, not the Lord personally. We have now come full circle. The disciples, introduced to the resurrection first by angels (“messengers” in both Hebrew and Greek), are now to become the Lord's messengers, carrying the news of the resurrection to others.

Notice also the sequence of hearers, who become the messengers. The very first witnesses are not the apostles, but the women, who could not even bear witness in a court of law! We do not appeal to people on the basis of our prestige and position, but simply with the word of God, backed up by the power of the Spirit.

Notes

Witnesses to the Resurrection

“μαρτυσ@[noun plural nominative] <and> εμῖ” appears only in Luke-Acts in the NT.

Repeatedly, the resurrection is the object of their testimony:

Luke 24:48 And **ye are witnesses** of these things.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto** me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus hath God **raised up**, whereof **we all are witnesses**.

Acts 3:15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath **raised from the dead**; whereof **we are witnesses**.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God **exalted** with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And **we are his witnesses of these things**; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Acts 10:39 And **we are witnesses** of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God **raised up the third day**, and shewed him openly;

Acts 13:30 But God **raised him from the dead**: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, **who are his witnesses** unto the people.

The expression “ye are my witnesses” appears only 3X in the LXX of the canonical books,⁴ all in Isaiah 43-44. In this “spiritual manual for Babylonian captives,” the Lord provides reason for his people to retain their faith in him during their coming time in captivity, by showing his superiority to the gods of Babylon. He claims to be unique in two ways, summarized in ch. 45.

Note the use of the expression “beside me” מְבַלְעָדִי, which Isaiah uses only in these verses.

Is. 45:21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath **declared** this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else **beside me מְבַלְעָדִי**,⁵ **a just God and a Saviour**; there is none beside me.

- *A Savior*: 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.
- *God*: 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Consider first his claim to be unique as God, based on his ability to predict the future. Israel is to bear witness to this unique ability, after he carries out the deliverance he promises here. In contrast, the pagan gods have no witnesses.

Is. 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; **I am the first, and I am the last**; and **beside me there is no God**. 7 And who, as I, shall call, and

⁴ Once in Wis 4:6

⁵ The instances cited here exhaust the uses of מְבַלְעָדִי in Isaiah.

shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I **told** thee from that time, and have declared it? **ye are even my witnesses**. Is there **a God beside me**? yea, there is no God; I know not any. 9 They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and **they are their own witnesses**; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

God is unique, not just as deity, but as savior, and that is the subject of the other section. This one focuses not on predicting the future, but on God's success in the past, delivering Israel from Egypt and her enemies. Again, the pagan gods have no witnesses, but Israel is to be his witness.

Is. 43:9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can **declare** **לֵמַעַן** **C** this, and shew us former things? **let them bring forth their witnesses**, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. 10 **Ye are my witnesses [LXX impv]**, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: **before me** there was no God formed, neither shall there be **after me**. 11 I, even I, am the LORD; and **beside me** **מִבְּלֵעָדִי** **there is no saviour**. 12 I have **declared**, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore **ye are my witnesses**, saith the LORD, that I am God. 13 Yea, before the day was I am he; and **there is none that can deliver out of my hand**: I will work, and who shall let it?

To highlight God's uniqueness as savior, Isaiah (43:13) quotes Deuteronomy:

Deu 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: **I kill, and I make alive**; I wound, and I heal: **neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand**. **אֵין מִיֵּדִי מַצִּיל**
only in these two vv. in the OT

In witnessing to God as savior, Israel is to bear witness to the truth of Deut 32:39. But what is that truth? "I kill, and I make alive." This was Hannah's hope in her prayer of thanksgiving for the birth of Samuel:

1Sam. 2:6 **The LORD killeth, and maketh alive**: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

When the king of Syria sent Naaman to Israel to be healed of his leprosy, the king of Israel protested,

2Kings 5:7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, **Am I God, to kill and to make alive**, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?

But in fact, this is the good news that we celebrate today. Beside our God there is no Savior, for he is the one who kills and makes alive. He has killed his own son to take our place in bearing his wrath against our sin; and he has made him alive. This meaning of Deut 32:39 emerges in the light of two NT passages.

Rom. 4:24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

The agent for the resurrection is the Father, according to v. 24, and 8:32 makes him the agent for the delivering as well:

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Rom. 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

The Father has killed and made alive, in order to deliver his people. The final clause of Deut 32:39 also has a strong NT echo. The verb translated “deliver” נָצַל C H5337 means to remove something forceably. While it can mean “to save” (Table 3), it can also simply mean “remove.” It thus anticipates our Lord's promise,

John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, **neither shall any man pluck ἀρπάζω them out of my hand.** 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and **no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.** 30 I and my Father are one.

	נָצַל C	
αφαιρεω	5	165
εχαιρεω	76	140
ρυσμαι	73	180
σωζω	17	340
	191	

Table 3: LXX renderings of נָצַל C

The LXX nowhere translates נָצַל with ἀρπάζω, so the Lord is not quoting Deut 32:39 or Isa 43:13. But the concept of forceable removal certainly is common to both passages, and suggests that the OT passages can legitimately be understood to promise the security of those whom God has redeemed. In fact, Moses goes concludes his song,

Deut 32:43 Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will ~~be merciful unto~~ **make atonement for כַּפֵּר** D his land, and ~~to~~ his people.