

EXPOSITION OF LUKE

Message #124

Luke 23:54-24:11

One of the most important groups in any program of God are faithful women. Faithful women do things that men don't. Even when Jesus was here that was true. Faithful women followed Jesus Christ for years. They certainly were confused, perplexed, afraid and perhaps somewhat unbelieving as they watched the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, but they stayed with Him right to the end and even followed Him to the grave and **they became the first to realize He had risen from the dead.**

One thing that is so impressive about these women is that **“they remembered His words” (24:8)**. This was a key to their faith. This was a key to their stability and faithfulness and the same is true for us.

THE KEY TO A STABLE FAITH IN CONFUSING TIMES IS KNOWING AND REMEMBERING THE WORD OF GOD AND KNOWING THE RISEN SAVIOR.

These women are a tremendous example of this fact. Whether you are emotionally confused; mentally confused or spiritually confused, the key to getting out of the confusion is to remember and know the word of God.

In the resurrection narrative, God wants us to remember these women. They take front and center stage in the chronology of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are eight chronological facts that are brought out here:

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #1 – What the women did on the day of Christ's burial. **23:54-56**

The actual day of burial of the body of Jesus Christ was late Friday afternoon. The Sabbath day was fast approaching. The Sabbath day began at about 6 PM Friday night and lasted until about 6 PM Saturday night.

If we assume that Christ died somewhere around 3 PM, then Joseph had to go to Pilate and get permission to take the body, then go back and take it to the tomb, so it is fast approaching 6 PM. The Sabbath Day was a day set aside for rest and dedication to God (Ex. 20:8-11).

According to **verse 55**, there were a group of women who had been with Jesus Christ ever since Galilee. They had followed Him very early in His public ministry (Luke 4:14). So these ladies had been highly committed to Jesus Christ for three plus years (Luke 8:1-3). When Jesus Christ died on the cross, their devotion to Jesus Christ did not change. They literally followed Him to the grave.

These women had a devotion to Jesus Christ that was not intimidated or afraid of anyone or anything. In fact, as we will see it will be their devotion that will affect the men, the Apostles. Some of the most faithful, loyal, strong, stable people of God are the women.

Now according to **verses 55- 56**, after they saw where the body was laid, they returned to where they had been staying and immediately began to prepare spices and perfumes to anoint the body. Mark tells us that these women purchased their own spices (Mark 16:1) and John informs us that Nicodemus purchased 100 pound of spices (John 19:29). So to get this all together to anoint a dead body took some work. They got everything ready, but on the Sabbath Day they rested “according to the commandments.”

These were highly dedicated women of God. They demonstrated a courage and commitment to Jesus Christ that was even above that of the Apostles, who had all fled (John 20:19).

Now one thing that we may observe from this is that **had Nicodemus and the women actually believed what Christ had told them—He would rise the third day—they probably would not have done all this.**

W. H. Griffith Thomas made an interesting observation when he said that had the women really understood and believed what Jesus told them, they would not have wasted their time preparing to embalm the body. Although they meant well and loved Jesus, the truth is they are operating somewhat out of ignorance and disbelief.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #2 – What the women did on the first day of the week. **24:1**

These women were up early, hauling spices to the tomb. These ladies were not lazy. They got up early and got at it.

Not too many men, if any, would get up early to go to a cemetery. These women are up and heading that way before daybreak.

These women were go-getters and they are honored in Scripture for it.

Years ago in our first church we had a teen breakfast. Every other Thursday Mary and some other women would get up at 4:30-5 and go to church and cook breakfast for the teens to eat at 7 AM and then I would do a study and then we would take them to school. There was one woman who was so lazy that she would not even get up out of bed to bring her son to church by 7 AM. Someone had to stop and pick him up.

That was not the pattern of these women.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #3 – What the women discovered when they got to the tomb.
24:2-3

When the women got to the tomb in the wee hours of the morning, they were shocked by two discoveries:

Discovery #1 - They were shocked by what they did find. **24:2**

What they found is that the stone covering the tomb had been rolled away. When they got to the tomb, they found it had been opened. Now that would have been somewhat of a relief because they were wondering how they would get that stone moved.

Now a tomb opening was 4-6 feet in diameter. So a stone covering the tomb needed to be 4-6 feet in diameter and be about 1 inch thick. Depending on what kind of stone was used, the weight would be at minimum about a ton. Most say the stone would weigh between 2,000-4,000 pounds. The problem would not be getting the stone in front of the tomb because it was put in downhill groove and rolled into place. The problem would be removing the stone.

So when the women saw the stone removed, they were pleasantly surprised.

Discovery #2 - They were shocked by what they did not find. **24:3**

But what the women didn't find at the tomb was the body of Jesus Christ. The tomb was empty. **This discovery by these women right here is THE most critical discovery in all of history because every person must come up with some answer as to what happened to that body.**

Where did Christ's body go? The women found the tomb empty so where was the body?

(View #1) - Some have suggested that this was a body hiding conspiracy of the disciples.

They took the body and hid it and then told everyone He arose. The problem with this is:

- 1) Roman soldiers surrounded the tomb;
- 2) Most of the disciples laid down their own lives saying He arose from the dead. If they had taken and hid the body, you would not die for a lie.

(View #2) - Some have suggested that Jesus' death was apparent, not real.

In other words, it appeared as though He was dead but He wasn't really dead and He woke up and pushed a massive 2,000 pound boulder away and crawled away.

The problem with that is He was beaten up so badly, He couldn't even carry His own cross. He was crucified and hung in a hot sun for three hours. Roman soldiers said he was dead and Pilate checked to make sure he was dead before he released the body. To assume that Jesus came to while in the tomb and pushed a 2,000 pound stone out of the way and crawled away would be more miraculous than the resurrection.

(View #3) - Some have suggested that the women went to the wrong tomb.

The problem with this is that they followed and saw the exact tomb where Jesus was buried (Luke 23:55). This ridiculous argument says that not one woman remembered where the tomb was. That is ludicrous.

Frankly women often have better memories of where people are buried more than men. These women did not make a mistake; they knew exactly where Jesus had been buried.

Furthermore, there were soldiers at this tomb and when the Apostles learn the body is gone, they run to this very tomb.

There can be only one sane explanation for this and that is Jesus was raised from the dead just as He predicted (Luke 18:33).

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #4 – How the women reacted to the tomb events. **24:4-7**

When the women saw the empty tomb, they were perplexed, which means they were at a loss. They could not come up with any explanation as to what happened to the body of Jesus Christ. **The reason for their despair is that they had forgotten the word of God.**

When we forget the word of God, we will be at a loss to what to think or do.

God knew these women were perplexed so He sent two angels (John 20:12) who we learn from **verse 4** looked like men. The noun “men” is masculine which means that these angels took on the human resemblance of a man, not a woman.

Now these women are brave women but when they saw these two men in their dazzling clothing, they were “terrified” (**v. 5**). They bowed down their faces to the ground. The Greek is strong here and it appears to me that these ladies literally have their faces on the ground.

The angels asked the women a question and that is “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?” Everyone else in this cemetery is dead. But why do you seek the living Son of God here in a cemetery.

They are gently saying, you ladies are just a little off in your thinking.

Now in **verses 6-7**, the angels reminded them that Jesus had told them this clear back in Galilee. He had told them that He would be delivered, crucified and would be raised from the dead on the third day (i.e. Luke 9:22).

These women didn’t even need to be at this cemetery. Jesus was gone. So this whole endeavor, although well-meaning, is an endeavor of ignorance and unbelief.

A key to getting out of some emotional low is the facts of the word of God. We are accountable to hear the word and believe it.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #5 – How the women were delivered from despair. **24:8**

Look very carefully at this verse. What delivered these women was not the appearance of the angels, but that **“they remembered the word of God.”**

In any crisis of life this is the key to deliverance. Knowing and remembering the word of God is the key to coping with depressing things. Remember God's word; remember God's promises; remember God's care; remember God's program and remember that God will not ever leave His people or forsake His people; remember God's love and remember that God has said I will come back and get you. Remembering the word of God is a key to victory over depressing things.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #6 – What the women did when they knew the truth. **24:9**

As soon as the women knew the truth, they immediately returned from the tomb and reported everything to the eleven and the rest. **These women are the first evangelists to testify of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** They were the first to take the good news to others that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

It wasn't the Apostles who were the first, it was these faithful women. This must have been quite a moment when these women are instructing the eleven on the truth as it relates to Jesus Christ.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #7 – The identity of the women who were telling the Apostles. **24:10**

God wants some of the women specifically named in His word. They are the first women to believe Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

First on the list is Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene had at one time been a demon-possessed woman with many moral problems (Luke 8:20).

Second is Joanna. Joanna was the wife of Chuza (Luke 8:3). Chuza was a man who worked for Herod. Joanna came from a powerful political family. She was the "high class" woman of the group.

Third on the list was Mary, the mother of James. Now this was the James who was the son of Alphaeus (Matt.10:2-3). James, the brother of John, whose father's name was Zebedee (Matt. 4:21), is always identified as James, the brother of John.

Fourth, it is stated that there were "other women." The word "other" refers to the rest of the women or the remaining women not named who were there (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 272).

What we may conclude from this is that God used women from various backgrounds. Some had come from a very influential background. Some came from a demonic background. Some came from a very religious background and some came from heathen background. The common denominator of all of these women is that they loved the Lord and were committed to Jesus Christ.

God will greatly use any person, regardless of background, if that person will believe in Him and get serious about His word.

Think of this—these women were the last to leave the cross, the first to go to the tomb and the first to witness about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #8 – The Apostles would not believe the women. **24:11**

When the ladies told the Apostles and disciples the good news, their words seemed as nonsense talk. That word “nonsense” is one that means these Apostles thought what the women were saying was silly.

William Barclay said their words seemed like they came from fevered and insane minds.

But it was not the ladies who had problems with their minds, it was the men. These ladies knew the truth and told the truth.

What brought them out of their emotional despair was remembering the word of God. It always works. The word of God is the key.