

Bible Study Guide: Week of 4-11-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee] came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

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All four of the gospels report that the tomb of Jesus was found empty by women on Easter morning. It is noteworthy that the four agree on this detail. The four differ, however, in the stories about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus as well as in some of the other details about Jesus’ resurrection (as we will see). Unlike in Matthew’s account where the women merely go to look at the tomb, here the women come to anoint Jesus’ body. Unlike in Mark’s version, the women do not discuss “who will roll away the stone?” Luke simply tells us that they came upon an already opened tomb, entered it, and found no body there.

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Luke tells us that the women were “perplexed.” This word can also be translated as “at a loss.” That is, they weren’t sure what to do or how to proceed. The body of Jesus was now missing. You can well imagine their confusion and despair. Not only has Jesus been brutally murdered, but now his body seems to have gone missing, as well. Luke tells us that two men in dazzling clothes stood next to the women to deliver the message of the resurrection. It is curious that Luke—who has no qualms about speaking of angels (see Luke 2, for example)—doesn’t identify these men as “angels,” but rather as mere men. They are set apart as divine messengers by their clothing. Luke is the only New Testament author to use this word. He uses it here and in chapter 17 to describe the way a lightning bolt lights up the whole sky. The appearance of these men’s garments apparently is as dazzling as a lightning flash. This brings to mind the appearance of Jesus’ face and clothes at the Transfiguration. This also underscores the otherworldly

nature of these men who bring news of the resurrection. The men proclaim to the women that Jesus has done what he foretold, reminding the women of all Jesus had taught while they were with him. Their message is in harmony with early Christian teaching and proclamation about the resurrection of Jesus (see also 1 Cor. 15:3-5).

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The women “remembered” Jesus’ words. These women become the first of Jesus’ followers to engage in this pattern of remembering and interpreting Jesus’ words that would be a crucial part of the development of the early Christian community (see also, for examples, John 2:17 and 2:22 and 12:16). Interestingly in Luke’s version of this story, the women are not told, commanded, or encouraged to go and tell. Instead, their encounter with the men in dazzling clothes and their remembrance of Jesus’ words compelled them to go and share this news with the apostles.

“Apostles,” remember, means “ones who are sent.” Ironically, the women are the ones sent with this incredible gospel message to the men who were initially sent to spread Jesus’ word.

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Women in first century Judea were not considered credible witnesses. The fact that women are the first to receive the news of the resurrection is consistent with God’s habit of using unexpected people to do the work of God. Likewise, it is remarkable that all four gospel writers insist that women were the first to see and proclaim the resurrection. Here the male disciples of Jesus react as one would (sadly) expect men to react in that day and age—they don’t find the women’s testimony credible. Curiosity must have gotten the better of Peter, however. He runs to the tomb, sees the burial cloths and no body present, and returns home “amazed”—the same reaction that all the people had to the words of the shepherds about the infant Jesus in Luke 2 and the same reaction that the crowds and authorities had to Jesus’ acts of power during his earthly ministry. All we learn in this account is that some of Jesus’ female followers found an empty tomb, met men in dazzling clothes who told them Jesus had been raised, the women told the male followers of Jesus who refused to believe them, and Peter went and saw the empty tomb and left in wonderment. There is no real faith here to speak of. As yet, there is still no Jesus—he is mentioned in passing here. It will only be in the post-resurrection appearances that follow this story and in the church’s experience in later days and years that the disciples will believe in the resurrection. Here we have a mixture of doubt, perplexity, amazement, and wonder.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Why do you think the men in dazzling clothes asked the women, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”**
- 2. Why do you think the men didn’t believe the women? What do you think would happen today if a similar report came to our community of faith?**
- 3. Why do you think Peter got up to run to the tomb? How do you interpret his reaction once he saw the empty tomb for himself?**