

RAISED!

Salvation comes through Jesus' death and resurrection.

LUKE 24:1-12

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 24:6

- **READ** Luke 24, First Thoughts (p. 72), and Understand the Context (pp. 72–73). As you read Luke 24:1-12, imagine you are hearing this for the first time.
- **STUDY** Luke 24:1-12, using Explore the Text (pp. 73–77). A helpful study technique is comparing the gospel accounts of significant events in Jesus' life. Along with Luke 24, read Matthew 28; Mark 16; and John 20 noting the perspective of each Gospel writer. Use *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* found in print or digital format at LifeWay.com to aid your understanding of the passage.
- **PLAN** the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 78–79) and More Ideas (p. 80). Enlist volunteers to help find ways to make guests feel welcomed for this Easter session. Consult *QuickSource* for additional questions that you can use in leading the discussion and a possible Object Lesson idea for this week's study.
- **GAIN** insights from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploretheBible) or on iTunes.
- **GATHER** the following items: Personal Study Guides; and Create and make copies of an Awe-Inspiring worksheet for Focus Attention (p. 78). For More Ideas (p. 80): Bible dictionaries (in print or digital format) for the group to use. Prepare to display: **PACK ITEM 4** (*Poster: Christ Arose!*). Make copies of: **PACK ITEM 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*).



KEY DOCTRINE

Jesus

Jesus was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion (1 Cor. 15:1-8).

FIRST THOUGHTS

Think about the most awe-inspiring sight you've ever witnessed. Now, imagine walking through the darkness of a Sunday morning and finding something even more amazing: an empty tomb. The women who came to anoint Jesus' body expected to find a stone that needed to be removed. Instead, they found a doorway to eternity. The world had been changed forever. We're still experiencing the benefits of that change today.

(In PSG, p. 60) **List and rank awe-inspiring sights you have seen. What caused the feelings of awe?**

BIBLE SKILL

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read Matthew 27:62-66. The chief priests and Pharisees remembered Jesus' words. What steps did they take to ensure that Jesus' body stayed in the tomb? Read Matthew 28:11-15. To what extent did the Jewish leaders go to discredit the reports that Jesus had been raised from the dead? How effective were their efforts in changing the reports about Jesus' resurrection?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LUKE 24:1-53

Each of the four Gospels ends with the amazing news that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Luke's account of Jesus' resurrection can be divided into four parts: the empty tomb (Luke 24:1-12), the encounter on the road to Emmaus (24:13-32), the gathering of the disciples (24:33-49), and Jesus' ascension into heaven (24:50-53). All four Gospel writers included the women's discovery of the empty tomb and the angelic message that Jesus had been raised. The women were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection—this is the focus of this week's session.

Luke next related a story not found in the other Gospels: the two men returning to the village of Emmaus. Jesus joined them as they were "discussing and arguing" about the events that had taken place (24:15). The two men were prevented from recognizing Jesus. When asked, they recounted the events of Jesus' ministry, the crucifixion, and the report of the empty tomb. Jesus chastised the men for their slowness to believe the Scriptures. Beginning with Moses, He explained from Scripture the necessity of the Messiah's suffering and death. As they were eating the evening meal together, the men's eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, who immediately disappeared from their sight.

The two men returned to Jerusalem and joined the apostles and others gathered together. The men heard that Peter had seen Jesus, and they shared their own encounter with Him. During their discussion, Jesus suddenly appeared in the room. John pointed out that the doors were locked because of their fear of the Jewish leaders (John 20:19). After convincing the disciples He was not a ghost, Jesus opened their minds to understand that everything written about Him "in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" must be fulfilled (Luke 24:44). He then commissioned the disciples to proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name.

They were to begin their mission only after they had received the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke ended his Gospel with a brief description of Jesus' ascension back to the Father. The confusion and fear the disciples had experienced was replaced with joy and worship.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

DISCOVERED (LUKE 24:1-3)

VERSES 1-3

The women who came to the tomb were likely the same women who had been at the cross and who had traveled with Jesus in Galilee (Luke 23:49). The other Gospels begin the story of the empty tomb by identifying some of the women by name. Luke mentioned the women as a group but did not identify them by name until later (24:10). After determining the location of the tomb where Joseph buried Jesus' body, the women had returned home and prepared the perfumes and spices that would be necessary for a proper burial (23:55-56). Once Sabbath was over, the women headed for the tomb, **bringing the spices they had prepared**. All four Gospels agree that the women left **very early in the morning** on the day after Sabbath, though each Gospel writer expressed that truth in a slightly different way. John pointed out that it was still dark (John 20:1). Matthew said, "as the first day of the week was dawning" (Matt. 28:1). Luke's expression could be paraphrased "at the crack of dawn." The women wasted no time in going to the tomb to complete the customary burial ritual.

A tomb cut into rock typically had a large, wheel-shaped **stone** that was **rolled** on a track or rut to cover the opening of the tomb. Joseph used such a stone to close the entrance to the cave in which Jesus was buried (Matt. 27:60). According to Mark, the women discussed the difficulty they might encounter in attempting to remove the stone from the tomb's entrance (Mark 16:3). All the gospel writers mentioned that when the women arrived at the tomb, the stone had been removed. Matthew alone described the way the stone was removed: an angel of the Lord showed up, accompanied by an earthquake, and rolled the stone away (Matt. 28:2).

The tomb would have had an access opening that generally was small enough to require most people to stoop to enter the cave (John 20:5). The corpse would have been laid out on a stone bench that had been cut out of the wall. The women entered the tomb to finish the burial ritual. To their surprise, not only was the tomb open, but the grave contained no corpse. Luke stated this truth simply and objectively: **they went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus**. Worshiping on the first day of the week celebrates Jesus' resurrection and reminds us that Jesus' tomb is still empty.

VERSES 1-3

¹ On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

REPORTED (LUKE 24:4-9)

VERSES 4-5

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. ⁵ So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground. “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men.

VERSES 4-5

The empty tomb was not enough to convince the women that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The Greek word translated **perplexed** is the same word used to describe Festus’s state of mind after he heard the charges brought against Paul by the Jewish religious leaders (Acts 25:20). It described one who was confused, uncertain, or in doubt about an issue. When Mary Magdalene encountered the empty tomb, her initial assumption was that someone had taken Jesus’ body (John 20:2,13,15). All four Gospel writers describe the tomb as open and empty, but none of those who saw the empty tomb drew from that empty tomb the conclusion that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The significance of the empty tomb had to be interpreted.

Luke recorded that **two men** suddenly appeared in the tomb with the women. John also mentioned that two angels were present in the tomb, one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus had lain (John 20:12). On the other hand, Mark (Mark 16:5) and Matthew (Matt. 28:2) mentioned only one person. These types of differences in the various accounts have been challenged by some as inaccuracies. However, mentioning one person does not mean that two were not present. Luke and John mentioned both of the angels, while Mark and Matthew mentioned only the angel who spoke to the women.

The physical appearance of the men in the dark tomb was striking. The word used to describe their clothing, **dazzling**, also was used to describe a flash of lightning (Luke 17:24). Matthew described it this way: “His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow” (Matt. 28:3).

Luke described the two beings as *men*, not angels, though later the men on the road to Emmaus said that the women reported seeing “angels” (Luke 24:23). Mark identified the messenger as a young man. Matthew referred to the visitor as an “angel of the Lord” (Matt. 28:2). John called the messengers angels. Luke opened his Gospel with descriptions of Gabriel explaining to Zechariah and Mary the significance of the two births that were about to take place (Luke 1:11-20,26-38). Now, at the end of the Gospel, angels again appear to explain the significance of the death and resurrection that had just occurred.

The sudden presence of the angels startled the women and produced a strong sense of fear. The same word described the reaction of the disciples to Jesus’ sudden appearance in the room where they were meeting (24:37). The women’s immediate response was submission and reverence—they **bowed down to the ground**.

The empty tomb changed everything.

The angels’ first words to the women could be taken as a mild rebuke. Their rhetorical question pointed out the women’s basic error: you don’t look for a living person by searching among dead people. Of course, the

women had come to the tomb not seeking a living person but to pay their respect to one who was dead. The empty tomb changed everything.

(In PSG, p. 64) **What are some ways people seek life among the dead today?**

VERSES 6-9

The angels stated explicitly what they had implied in their rhetorical question: **He is not here, but he has risen!** The women's devotion and piety in coming to anoint Jesus' body was based on a misunderstanding. The way to correct that misunderstanding was to **remember**. Although the empty tomb did not, by itself, convince the women of the resurrection, they were challenged to believe the proclamation of the angels and remember what Jesus had said to them while they were **still in Galilee**.

Luke alone among the Gospel writers mentioned Jesus' prediction of His death and resurrection in his account of the resurrection. In three different settings, the details of Jesus' predictions were used to interpret His death and resurrection (the tomb, the road to Emmaus, and the room with the disciples). The angels' proclamation is similar to Jesus' first passion prediction in Galilee (9:22) with a few minor differences drawn from other occasions when Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. Rather than "rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes," Jesus was **betrayed into the hands of sinful men**. In addition, the angels changed "killed" to **crucified**, reflecting the method by which Jesus actually died, perhaps influenced by Jesus' words in Luke 18:31-33.

While walking with the two men on the road to Emmaus, Jesus used the teaching of Moses and the prophets to explain to them the necessity of the Messiah suffering as He entered His glory (24:25-27). In the room with His disciples, Jesus once again tied His suffering and death to the teaching of Moses and the prophets and used Scripture to interpret His resurrection (24:44-46). Jesus had prepared His disciples for His death and resurrection, but sorrow had overwhelmed them (John 16:6). Standing in an empty tomb, the angels' call to the women to remember worked: **they remembered his words**. The empty tomb alone did not convince the women that Jesus was alive, but remembering Jesus' promise that He would be raised from the dead did.

These women had followed Jesus in Galilee, had been present at the cross, had watched Him be buried, and finally had shown up at an empty tomb. Having heard the testimony of the angels, the women returned to the place where the disciples had gathered to report what they had seen and heard. The reference to **the Eleven** is a reminder of Judas's betrayal and departure from the group; the Twelve are now *the Eleven*. Others were also gathered with the Eleven when the women gave their report (**all the rest**). Later, when the two men from Emmaus showed up, Luke referred

VERSES 6-9

⁶ "He is not here, but he has risen! Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?'"

⁸ And they remembered his words. ⁹ Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest.

to the group as “the Eleven and those with them” (24:33). The group may have included Jesus’ mother and brothers as well as other disciples (Acts 1:14-15).

The antidote prescribed by the angel for the women’s confusion was to remember the words of Jesus. Can you think of a recent time when not remembering Jesus’ words caused you confusion or led you into wrong behavior?

CONFIRMED (LUKE 24:10-12)

VERSES 10-11

While the other three Gospel writers mentioned the names of the women before the discovery of the empty tomb, Luke delayed naming the women until after they reported their findings to the apostles. Women were not generally viewed as reliable witnesses, especially in a court of law. Although the Old Testament did not specifically forbid women from serving as witnesses, most Jews at that time generally treated the testimony of women with suspicion. About 200 years after the fact, the pagan philosopher Celsus, discussing the resurrection with the church leader Origen, made fun of the fact that women were the first witnesses. He viewed the women’s testimony as unreliable, and therefore, a major weakness in the resurrection story. However, the women being the first witnesses to the empty tomb actually adds to the veracity of the Gospels’ accounts. It is more likely that a made-up story would have avoided the problem of women as witnesses by making men the first witnesses.

The women being the first witnesses to the empty tomb actually adds to the veracity of the Gospels’ accounts.

Mary Magdalene was mentioned first by each of the Gospel writers. Luke alone mentioned *Joanna*. Both of these women were mentioned as women who followed Jesus in Galilee and used their financial resources to support Jesus and His disciples. Joanna’s husband was a steward who served under Herod (Luke 8:2-3). Mark and Luke mentioned *Mary the mother of James*, who was probably the same as Matthew’s “the other Mary.” Salome was mentioned only by Mark. However, Luke indicated that women other than those named were involved: *the other women with them*. John mentioned only Mary Magdalene by name at the tomb, but her reply to the Peter and John implies that she was not alone: “we don’t know where they’ve put him” (John 20:2).

For the second time in two verses, Luke recorded the testimony of the women. The phrase *were telling* indicates a process rather than a single action. Apparently, the women’s initial report was greeted with skepticism by the men, so the women continued to make their case.

VERSES 10-11

¹⁰ Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things.

¹¹ But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

For additional context, read “Women as Eyewitnesses,” available digitally in the Spring 2020 issue of *Biblical Illustrator* for Explore the Bible at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

The apostles found the women's report to lack any credibility. The Greek word translated **nonsense** occurs only here in the New Testament. The same word could serve as a medical term to describe delirium caused by high fever.

The apostles were not naïve or gullible people who could be easily fooled into believing someone had been raised from the dead. They understood dead people normally stay dead. They had to be convinced that Jesus was actually alive.

VERSE 12

Although Peter did not believe the report of the women, apparently his curiosity got the better of him because he **got up and ran to the tomb**. According to John's Gospel, Peter and John (the beloved disciple) ran to the tomb together, with John out-running Peter and arriving at the tomb first (John 20:3-10). Cleopas, talking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, reported that "some of those who were with us" went to the tomb to confirm the women's testimony (Luke 24:24). As with the names of the women and the number of angels at the tomb, the mention of only one person does not mean two people were not there. Luke focused his story on Peter, leaving John out of his description.

As mentioned above, the entrances to these types of tombs were usually rather small, requiring most adults to stoop to enter. The linen cloth that had been used to wrap the body of Jesus for burial was lying where Jesus' body had lain earlier. The report of the women was accurate: the tomb was empty. Peter left the tomb **amazed at what had happened**. The Greek word translated *amazed* could describe someone who was impressed or someone who was disturbed. Luke gave no indication at this point as to what Peter's state of mind was. The narrative shifts abruptly to the story of the two men walking to Emmaus. However, when these two men return to Jerusalem after talking with Jesus, they were told that Jesus had appeared to Peter (24:34). Luke did not give the details of this meeting, but the presence of the empty tomb, accompanied by a face-to-face meeting with Jesus, convinced Peter that Jesus had truly been raised from the dead.

The apostles were unconvinced by the witness of the women. Do you think their unbelief was a result of their attitude toward women or the enormity of testimony that they brought? Can you think of a time when you let your attitude toward God's messenger keep you from hearing a word that God had for you?

VERSE 12

¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. When he stooped to look in, he saw only the linen cloths. So he went away, amazed at what had happened.

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

SHARE: Prepare a simple Awe-Inspiring worksheet that contains the title and five blank lines numbered one through five. Give each person a copy of the worksheet as they gather and instruct them to list five awe-inspiring experiences or locations. After everyone is present, use a round-robin approach to sharing what each person wrote. Encourage short responses so everyone has a chance to speak. When everyone has shared their five experiences, ask: *What caused the feelings of awe?* (PSG, p. 60)

TRANSITION: *Awe-inspiring experiences are often those that happen at a special moment in God's creation, or maybe they are unexpected moments that catch us off guard. What about an awe-inspiring experience that goes beyond human understanding, like the discovery of an empty tomb?*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: *Paul was very articulate early in his Letter to the Romans concerning sin and salvation. He wrote about dying to sin, being buried with Christ, and rising again to a new life. That imagery was familiar to the followers of Christ in Rome because everything they knew about their newfound faith was rooted in the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection.*

GUIDE: Lead the group to recount the burial of Jesus following the crucifixion. Focus on the timing of events and the impact of the Sabbath that began at sunset on Friday and lasted until sunset on Saturday. Note the role of the women surrounding Jesus. Invite a volunteer to read Luke 23:49,55-56.

READ: Explain that Luke 24 describes resurrection morning. **Call for someone to read aloud Luke 24:1-3**, and invite the group to listen for two surprises the women experienced upon arriving at the tomb.

DISCOVER: Ask: *What were the two surprises the women experienced?* After the group responds, say, *Mark's account noted that the women were worried about moving the stone (Mark 16:3). But to their surprise, the stone had been moved—not for Jesus to leave but for the women to enter. When they entered, they were surprised because Jesus' body was not there.*

DISCUSS: An explanation of the empty tomb is at the heart of Easter and the heart of the Christian faith. Ask: *How does a person's explanation of the empty tomb expose his or her biases and values?* (PSG, p. 63)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Luke 24:4-5, and invite the group to identify the emotions experienced by the women. Say: *The women were perplexed (confused) by the empty tomb and then terrified (not afraid but in the sense of awe and respect) by the "men in dazzling clothes" (angels).*

EXPLORE: *The angels posed a question that challenged the reason for the women's presence at the empty tomb: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5) Ask: What are some ways people seek life among the dead today?* (PSG, p. 64)

READ: Invite someone to read aloud **Luke 24:6-9**, as you lead the group to identify how the angels answered their own question.

DISCUSS: *Why should the women not have been surprised that the tomb was empty? After the group responds, say: The women either did not understand Jesus' explanation of His purpose or they failed to remember it in their grief. Once they heard the angels' reminder, all of Jesus' teachings came back to them and the light of truth began to clear some of their confusion.*

HIGHLIGHT: To further clarify the confusion of Jesus' followers, read the paragraph beginning "Once the women heard the angels' reminder ..." on pages 64–65 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: *What keeps a person from considering the claims of Jesus and His resurrection?*

PROBE: *How does God's Word validate the resurrection of Jesus? How does the Bible help a person understand Jesus' resurrection?* (PSG, p. 66) **Instruct the group to read Luke 24:10-12** to discover answers to these questions (reliable witnesses experienced the empty tomb; the resurrection was real enough to warrant sharing it with others; the disciples' skepticism was satisfied with actual experiences with Jesus).

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

SUMMARIZE: Call attention to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Christ Arose!*). Remind the group of today's memory verse when the angels said to the women, "He is not here, but he has risen!" (Luke 24:6). Highlight that salvation comes through Jesus' death and resurrection. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*) to those who need one.

KEY DOCTRINE: Invite a volunteer to lead the group in reading the Key Doctrine: Jesus (PSG, p. 63): *Jesus was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion (1 Cor. 15:1-8).*

REFLECT: *Jesus' death and resurrection provides salvation to all who believe. Ask: What impact does the empty tomb have on your life? How are you living out Jesus' resurrection each day?* (PSG, p. 67)

CHALLENGE: *Jesus' death and resurrection demand a response. Ask: With whom can you share about the resurrection of Jesus? Write their initials and begin to pray each day for the opportunity to share.* (PSG, pp. 67) Refer to the inside cover of the PSG and instruct the group to discuss with someone sitting next to them how they can use this information to share Christ with a friend.

CELEBRATE: Lead in a time of celebration of the risen Savior using the Suggested Music Idea (p. 80). Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for God's gift of His Son who died and rose for our salvation.



PRACTICE

- Churches often see people on Easter who are rarely seen at other times of the year. Follow up on guests who attended for the first time. Encourage them to make group Bible study a regular part of their lives.
- Email the group with the single message, *Christ is risen! Be prepared for responses like, He is risen indeed, or He certainly is.*
- Consider those in your life who need to hear the message of salvation and plan to share the gospel with them this week.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

As an option for Focus Attention, display pictures of several national icons that draw people's attention (i.e., Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, Mount Rushmore, Golden Gate Bridge). Ask: *List and rank awe-inspiring sights you have seen. What caused the feelings of awe?* (PSG, p. 60)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- To enhance the discussion of the angels at the tomb, use a Bible dictionary to research and share information about the presence of angels in the New Testament. For example, Luke wrote in Luke 2:8-14 about angels announcing Jesus' birth to terrified shepherds, and in Luke 24:4-7 he wrote about angels appearing to confused women to explain Jesus' resurrection.
- Use the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 65) to contrast the response of the apostles to the account of the women who visited the tomb to the response of the chief priests' and Pharisees' recollection of Jesus' words: *Read Matthew 27:62-66. The chief priests and Pharisees remembered Jesus' words. What steps did they take to ensure that Jesus' body stayed in the tomb? Read Matthew 28:11-15. To what extent did the Jewish leaders go to discredit the reports that Jesus had been raised from the dead? How effective were their efforts in changing the reports about Jesus' resurrection?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Guide the group to read and discuss the second question set on page 67 of the PSG: *Discuss ways people today are guilty of forgetting the words of Jesus. How can you and the members of your Bible study hold one another accountable for remembering and obeying Jesus' words?*

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Lead the group in a responsive reading of Charles Wesley's "Hymn for Easter Day" (known today as "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"). Read the text and invite the group to chime in with the alleluias.