

**NUDGED BY ANGELS**  
**Luke 24:1-12, 33-49**

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It would be hard to imagine anything more horrible than what the followers of Jesus experienced. They had joined the pilgrims in proclaiming, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! Hosanna!” just days earlier, only to witness their would-be Messiah crucified between two criminals on a cross (Luke 19:37-38; 23:33).

Every hope they had that Jesus would release them from Roman oppression was lost. Every dream they had dreamt about living as the free people of God had been turned into a nightmare, as the crucified body of their Messiah had been placed in a borrowed tomb (Luke 23:55). As the Sabbath is over, the women who stood last and longest at the cross are the first ones to hurry to take care of the buried body of their Lord.

**Rolled Away from the Tomb (Luke 24:1-3)**

Jesus had been buried with haste due to the approaching Sabbath. The women witnessed that the anointing of his body was rough shod, at best, and incomplete, at worst. They notice, as they approach the tomb with anointing spices, that the stone has already been rolled away from the entrance so that they can observe the emptiness of his place of burial.

**Perplexed over the Loss of Their Lord’s Body (Luke 24:4)**

The empty tomb apparently had no significance for the women who arrive to find his body missing. As is often the case, what their human minds could not comprehend had to be explained by God’s divine revelation. Two men, angels in the story, dressed in glowing white garments, offer an explanation.

Luke further describes the angelic characters as those who “stood before them.” This Lukan-style language is a pronouncement of divine presence. For example, in Luke 2:9, the angel of the Lord “suddenly stood before” the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.... In Acts, another book written by Luke, the same Greek construction is used (though sometimes translated differently) for the sudden appearance of a supernatural being to Peter as he escapes prison (Acts 12:7). “To stand before,” therefore, is Luke’s way of communicating a divine visitation.

As we saw in Luke’s stories surrounding Jesus’ birth, an angel has to explain, to reveal, the real meaning behind the human circumstances. Remember, Gabriel appeared to interpret signs and events at the beginning of Luke’s story, to explain what God was about to do. In the same fashion, angels now appear to explain what God has already done. As the angels speak in unison, they meet the Jewish criteria of two witnesses to substantiate an account.

### **Terrified and Bowed to the Ground (Luke 24:5)**

As is often the case in scripture, when one who is human comes in contact with the divine, human terror results, as evidenced in the women's bowed posture at the divine's proclamation (see Isaiah 6:1-5; Revelation 1:17). The angels pose the most important question in the history of humanity: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" With that question, they have informed the women, once and for all, of the greatest news of the cosmos—they still serve a living Lord, not a dead revolutionary.

### **Raised from the Dead (Luke 24:6-7)**

The angels explain that there is no need for perplexity; Jesus had prophesied, yes, even warned them about all the things that would take place. The call from the angels is to remember the words that Jesus had said concerning his future. In some ways, the call to "remember" what was said (see Luke 24:44) is the second rebuke, as they have already been scolded for seeking the living among the dead.

How many times had Jesus prophesied concerning both his death and resurrection (Luke 9:22, 44; 18:31-33)? Had the disciples actually listened to their Lord, they would have been expecting, even rejoicing about the pending and now present resurrection.

### **Remembered His Word (Luke 24:8)**

Though it took the *nudging by angels*, the women, finally, remember the words of their Lord. In the act of remembering, they also believe, as is made evident by their report to the disciples.

### **Announced All These Things (Luke 24:9-10)**

Remembering Jesus' predictions about the resurrection, the once-doubting women now rise up to go and tell the eleven disciples and others. They had been eyewitnesses of it all—the crucifixion, the burial, and, now, the empty tomb.

Lest the reader imagine that Luke was either generalizing or fantasizing, he gives us a list of those who saw the Lord's empty tomb: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary (James' mother), and the rest.

Note that the women "kept telling" (an imperfect tense), a way of indicating that they were consistently insisting that their marvelous story about the resurrection of Jesus was true.

### **Appeared as Nonsense (Luke 24:11)**

Just as the women did not immediately believe that the empty tomb was a sign of a seemingly impossible event—a resurrection—the disciples also refuse to remember the predictions of their Lord. Instead, they dismiss the reports of the women as "utter nonsense," a term used to describe the delirious talk of the sick.

We should not miss what has just taken place—Jesus' own disciples are the first skeptics of the resurrection. We, therefore, must not be impatient with others who have yet to come to belief.

### **Peered in to See for Himself (Luke 24:12)**

Refusing to simply accept the word of excited, and possibly delirious, women, Peter rises up and runs to the tomb, only to find linen cloths, but no corpse of his Lord. Luke describes Peter as

“marveling to himself,” surely an indication that Peter has a positive response to the wondrous event. In fact, Luke often uses this language as an indication of a positive response to a wondrous event (Luke 1:21-22, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 11:14; 20:16; Acts 2:7; 4:3-4).

### **Explained to Them (Luke 24:13-32)**

Narrating an event that is only found in his Gospel, Luke now shares the story of a mysterious traveler who accompanies two disciples on the road to Emmaus. These followers of Jesus are despondent and disappointed leaving Jerusalem, as they passionately discuss the horrific events of Good Friday. Posing as a clueless outsider, Jesus walks alongside these disciples, explaining to them, from both Moses and all the prophets, the prophecies that spoke of him.

As they invite Jesus in “to stay with them,” he reclines at the table, taking bread, blessing it, and breaking it to give to them. As surely as their eyes have been blinded to his identity (24:16), they are now open (24:31) as God reveals the risen Christ. They understand that the Messiah must suffer before he enters his glory.

### **Return to Jerusalem (Luke 24:33-35)**

Having discovered the power of the resurrection, the disciples on the road to Emmaus return back to Jerusalem to find the eleven disciples gathered together. Even before they can utter the good news concerning their divine companion, the eleven make known that the Lord has been raised and has appeared to Peter.

How comforting it must have been to learn that Jesus appeared not only to them, but also to others. The mounting evidence concerning the living Lord has expanded, beyond the women who saw the angels, to multiple appearances before disciples—the actual sight of the living Lord.

In what must surely be an allusion to the once-practiced (Luke 22:14-23) and future Lord’s Supper, the disciples on the road to Emmaus make known that their eyes were opened with the breaking of bread. Their opened eyes and burning hearts now led to open mouths that proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus.

### **Terrified and Fearful (Luke 24:36-38)**

While Luke takes no time to elaborate concerning the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body, he does make it clear that Jesus can, suddenly and inexplicably, stand in their midst. New Testament scholar David Garland notes that Luke’s Gospel begins with Zacharias terrified when confronted by the angel Gabriel (1:12, 18-20) and ends with the disciples being terrified by Jesus’ divine appearing. Garland concludes, “Like Zacharias, they must move from fear and doubt to faith and courage.”

### **Showed Them His Hands (Luke 24:39-40)**

While Jesus’ resurrection body is not limited by time or space, we should, nonetheless, understand his resurrection as bodily, involving the flesh. Calling upon his disciples to “touch me and see,” Jesus is proving that he is not an airy ghost, but, rather, a flesh-and-bone body.

**Raised from the Dead on the Third Day (Luke 24:46)**

Just as Jesus had previously indicated to his disciples that he must suffer and be resurrected (Luke 9:22; 18:31-33; 24:7), Jesus once again redefines what it means to be the Messiah by stating that the Christ, the Messiah, must both suffer and be raised from the dead on the third day. While he previously identified himself in these suffering predictions as the “Son of Man,” he now applies both the suffering and the resurrection to the Messiah, the Christ.

**Preached in His Name (Luke 24:47-48)**

The resurrected Jesus makes clear that his message of crucifixion and resurrection is not to be kept quiet, but, rather, preached to all the nations. The disciples were to begin in Jerusalem and then go forth to all nations (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2). Repentance also is the appropriate response to a call to salvation in Acts, Luke’s second volume (2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22). Such repentance includes realigning one’s life with the purposes and plans of God found in the story of Jesus.

**Conclusion**

We know how the disciples responded to the discovery of the empty tomb. The only question that remains is: “How will we respond?” His resurrection is a cosmic event unparalleled in human history, but it will be repeated many times over by all who call him Lord.