

“Too Good To Be True?” ~ Luke 24:36-53

April 26, 2017 ~ New City Church of Calgary ~ Pastor John Ferguson

What would you say to a colleague who said, “I don’t think anyone can know anything about what happens when someone dies”? How can we know anything for certain about what happens after death. How do we know that death is not the end?

Basic Christianity 101 teaches that there will be a bodily resurrection from the dead. Apostle’s Creed says, “We believe in the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting....” Is this mere wish fulfillment?

Context: Luke has written this gospel to give us assurance about the person of Jesus Christ (1:1-4). He has told us about some jaw-dropping miracles, mind-blowing teachings about God, and now he is parading eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus before us. (1) He has already told us the names of some of the women and a prominent disciple of Jesus who went to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty; (2) He’s told us about the unforgettable encounter that a disciple named Cleopas had with the risen Christ; and now as Cleopas and his traveling partner return to the primary disciples of Jesus to report to them that Jesus has indeed risen, Jesus himself shows up and blows away his disciples not only by his appearance, but also by what he told them.

So I want to invite you back to a small dwelling in Jerusalem as we listen in to Luke’s account of the evening that changed not only the disciples, but forever changed history.

**36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!”
37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.**

1. “Peace be with you!”

(1) These were the first words he spoke to his friends who had betrayed him: “Peace.”

- Luke 1:79, Zechariah predicted that Jesus would “guide our feet into the way of peace.”
- Luke 2:14, the angels promised that Jesus would bring peace on earth.
- John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.”
- Now Jesus, having borne the sins of his people, and having gone through the grave, now bursts upon the scene and says to them “Peace.” Entirely appropriate, not simply because they were startled, but because Jesus himself has become our Prince of Peace and has secured peace with God.

(2) But they were anything but peaceful; they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

2. Jesus suddenly appeared to them. John 20:19 says that the doors were locked for fear of the Jews.

(1) The objection could be raised that Jesus didn’t physically, bodily rise from the dead, but was only a spirit. Maybe, it could be argued, Jesus only appeared to them as some sort of ghostly apparition. After all, bodies can’t pass through solid, locked doors....

- Jesus’ resurrected body had extraordinary, “supernatural” abilities.
- The Apostle Paul describes the resurrection bodies we will some day acquire as powerful, imperishable, glorious bodies; bodies he describes as “spiritual,” which for him meant bodies animated by the Spirit of God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42ff.) These bodies, like Jesus’, are not bound by the normal laws of physical existence.

(2) Luke knows that some would have the objection that Jesus was merely a spirit; even the original disciples thought that the appearance of Jesus was some ghostly apparition. So Luke uses the remaining parchment to give us some very important details that would dismantle such a notion.

**38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”
40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.**

1. Jesus asks two questions: (1) Why are you troubled? (2) Why do doubts arise in your hearts?

- The last thing they knew was that Jesus was tortured to within an inch of his life; he was brutally crucified on a Roman Cross. And now he appeared before them. They didn't have categories for this. They had never seen a resurrected body nor did they know what resurrected bodies could do. They are troubled and doubting what their eyes are showing them.

2. Jesus shows them his nail-pierced hands and feet.

- (1) Cf. Doubting Thomas in John 20:24-29: "Unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."
- "Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you...." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."
- (2) "Touch" = to grasp or to handle." They grasped the physical body of Jesus. They touched his scars. They could feel his bones. They sensed the warmth of touch.
- 1 John 1:1, "...we have seen with our own eyes..., we have looked upon and have touched with our hands...."
 - Ryken, 674, "The wound-marks remain on the resurrection body of Jesus Christ as a permanent reminder of everything he has done for our salvation. He hands and feet show the Father that he has paid the full price for sin. At the same time, they show us that our sins are fully forgiven. In fact, the glorified wounds of Jesus show us the whole gospel. The marks on his body bear witness to the cross where he died. But his hands and feet belong to the same resurrection body that came out of the empty tomb. These are the two great facts of the gospel: Jesus died, and then in the same body he rose again. These two facts give us the good news of our salvation: by the cross our sins are forgiven, and by the empty tomb we have the free gift of resurrection life."

41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.

1. A curious phrase: "...they still disbelieved for joy...."

- Luke is trying to communicate something extraordinary here. It's not that they were refusing to believe, it's that they could hardly believe their eyes. It's like when we experience something so amazing and respond by saying, "I can't believe it!" "I can't believe I got into law school!" "I can't believe the Flames won the Stanley Cup!"
- Only their "disbelieving for joy" is amped exponentially; they are witnessing the resurrected, immortal body of Jesus.

2. The meal....spirits by definition can't eat because they don't have physical bodies.

- Acts 10:40-41, Peter said, "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear...to us who had been chosen by God as eyewitnesses, who who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures....

1. **Remember Jesus' appearance to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus?** He said to them, "'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself..." (24:26-27). Then vs. 32, "They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within in us...while he opened the to us the Scriptures?"
2. **The ability to understand the Scriptures...to understand the Gospel is a miracle that Jesus works within us:** "...he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...."

46 ...and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

1. The Scriptures are about two things: The Messiah of God & The Mission of God

2. “You are witnesses of these things.”

1. They were eyewitnesses.

- Acts 1:3, “To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”
- Acts 2:23ff, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and knowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raise him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it....This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.”

2. We are witnesses proclaiming their eyewitness testimony.

50 And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple blessing God.

1. **If Jesus predicted his death and subsequent resurrection three days later**, and actually died and rose again, and if his bodily appearances not simply convinced them that Jesus was alive, but also transformed them into the most fearless witnesses that this world has ever known, then our response should be not only to listen to their testimony, not only witness their transformed lives, but believe their message that Jesus is now the risen Lord of all.

2. **CS Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe***

- “She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backward.”

With the resurrection of Jesus Christ, death began working backwards.

Application: Do you believe this? If not, why not?

Three key facts: (1) There was an execution; (2) There was an empty tomb; (3) There were eyewitnesses.

- Part 2: The book of Acts, “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”
- Leslie Newbigin, “[This confession, namely that Jesus is Lord] is distinguished in that it is a commitment to a belief about the meaning of the whole of human experience in its entirety--namely, the belief that this meaning is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified, risen, and destined to reign over all things.”
- Romans 10:9-10, 13, “...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.... For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**NCC, May you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord
and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.**