

# The King Triumphant!

April 1, 2018

Luke 24

He is risen! He is risen indeed! This morning we come to the third and last in our Easter series on the kingship of Jesus. We have already discovered that Jesus, when He entered Jerusalem on what we celebrate as Palm Sunday, came in as the King we all would want, would expect, would love to get behind. He came in humbly, confidently, with resolve, with a whole host of people trailing behind and running out from the city to meet Him. They hailed Him as their King, called upon Him to save them, blessed Him as the Sent One of God.

But then we saw that their expectations were warped, skewed. They thought they knew what the coming of this King meant for them: freedom from their Roman oppressors. Instead, His first target as newly hailed King was to enter the temple and stir things up, disrupting the regular, usual, profitable trade surrounding the worship of God. "This is not what My Father intended!" He exclaimed.

Something was wrong, something was not lining up with their expectations. And so, less than a week later, His enemies struck. They arrested Him in the dead of night, put on a series of mock trials, and called for His execution. By the end, the people, once His strong supporters, switched sides, joining in the calls for His crucifixion. But in that moment, we can see what they failed to see, that Jesus was coming as the King they needed, not the King they wanted. Their greatest oppressor was not Caesar, but Satan. His most deadly weapon against them was not swords, but sin. The consequences of his oppression was not taxes but damnation. And the only way to defeat him was for the real King to die a sacrificial death for His people.

On Friday evening, we saw that the details of the story in Luke's gospel teach us the importance of the event. Every single person was guilty. Every single person joined in the rebellion against the true King. They chose to spare a true rebel instead of their true King. Yes, everyone was guilty. But in the midst of the

scene, an unlikely picture emerged. Jesus was executed between two common criminals. And these two represented all of humanity that day. They were guilty, being put to death for their crimes. One of them used the occasion to shame Jesus, to taunt Him and regurgitate the same temptation Satan had used against Him, to short circuit the plan of God and rescue Himself and them. He too saw Jesus and rejected Him as his king.

But the other man was different. He knew he was guilty, but he would not be a part of adding to his guilt by shaming this innocent man. He expressed his fear of God, knowing that it was one thing to die such a gruesome death for crimes he had committed, but it was a totally different thing to mock the Holy One of God who was suffering most unjustly. The Romans could take this man's life, but God could condemn his soul for all of time. So, instead of mocking Him or even ignoring Him, this criminal put his trust in Him. He requested that Jesus remember Him, take action on his behalf when Jesus entered into His kingdom. He put His trust for his eternal life in a supposed king who was about to die. He declared that Jesus' death would actually mean His entrance to His kingdom in paradise. And this man entrusted himself of the possibility that he might join Jesus in that kingdom, as Jesus was dying on that cross. He believed the fruition of the Kingdom would come after Jesus' death. He embraced this dying Jesus as the King he needed.

Sure enough, Jesus responded to this criminal, granting his request in the most sure way possible: Jesus vowed that this man would that very day be with Jesus in His kingly paradise. He spoke with the authority of the King issuing a decree, sealing it with His blood.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus breathed His last and died. The people all returned to their daily lives. Was this the end?

No! Indeed, we are here today because this represented not the end of Jesus' life, but the beginning of a new chapter. The problem with the way things ended on the cross is that there would be no way to tell whether Jesus was telling the truth. If I told you that after I died, I was going to do something, how could I prove it? How could I show that I indeed was King, sitting on My throne, carrying out the King's duties?

This is where we pick up the story today. For you see, God's plan included a way to show everyone that everything written about Jesus was true, that He was true to His Father, that His promises could be trusted. He planned to bring Jesus back from the dead.

Everyone saw Him die. I mean I could go into detail, but it was quite clear that Jesus died. Agreed? They all saw it, they didn't even need to do what they normally did to make sure the condemned died because it was plain to see that Jesus was already dead. They did to Him what they did to all such people, they buried Him in a tomb. They laid Him to rest, as we might say. They rolled a heavy stone in front of the tomb and posted a guard to make sure no one messed with the grave. After all, there were rumors that this King claimed He would rise from the dead on the third day. I mean, we can't have a bunch of crazed fanatics going around claiming He rose from the dead when He did not.

But there were no such crazed fanatics that day. His disciples were in shock. They had no idea what had happened. The women who followed Jesus were in better shape. The text tells us they followed those who placed the body in the tomb to see where it was and how the tomb was laid out. Then they went home to prepare the spices and fragrances to cover up the inevitable stench of death.

Following the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, before it was even light, they went to the tomb to finish the job that was cut short because of the Passover. By this time, Jesus' dead body would have started to decay, and no one wants to smell that. So, you put all kinds of smelly stuff around the body and tomb to cover up the smell the rotting flesh. The women went at the crack of dawn, at the first possible time to finish making the smell just a bit less disgusting. I don't know about you, but this doesn't sound like fanatical disciples who were expecting Jesus to rise from the dead any time soon. This story was over!

And that is where we pick up the text for this morning, Luke 24. Follow along as I read the first account of Jesus' life after death. Let's see this event through their eyes, as they experienced it. READ Luke 24:1-12.

Main point: The reality of Jesus' claim of kingship was proven when He was raised triumphantly from the dead.

The title given to Him in Scripture is not just king, not even THE King. The title given to Him is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is King both of the living and the dead. How can we be sure? How can you back up such a claim? You back up the claim by fulfilling your own most out of your control promise to come back from the dead. By definition, you cannot control rising from the dead. Are we agreed?

I absolutely guarantee you that no one else in all of human history claimed to have authority after the grave, predicted he would return from the grave, and then do it. No one ever has done that except One, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He predicted it, He entrusted His spirit to God as He died, and then He rose from the dead to be seen by hundreds, at multiple times, doing the same miraculous things as before. Jesus Himself raised several, including His friend, Lazarus from the dead, proving such a thing was possible. But Lazarus did not predict it, orchestrate it, prove anything by it. But Jesus was the opposite. He said on multiple occasions that He would die and then three days later rise from the dead. Who can make up that sort of claim?

And then, He made the most dramatic exit from the scene as possible: he ascended to heaven right in front of them. Yes, this mind blowing scene represents Jesus' triumphant return. This was the true return of the King.

As we work our way through the text, I want you to see how this is presented. It was not wishful thinking taken too far on the part of the disciples. It went totally against the expectations of those closest to Him. They were as surprised as anyone else would be that it actually happened. In fact, they couldn't believe it when it happened right in front of them. They had to be convinced that it really did take place.

v.1- On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

The other gospels have different details about the event to be sure, but this morning we are following Luke's account of the event. We note here that it was the women who were the first visitors to the empty tomb. But they did not come expecting an empty tomb. They came expecting a body beginning to decay. They came as the most humble of servants, doing the stinkiest of duties, caring for dead bodies. But when they got there, they found that the stone had been rolled away out of its track. This track was likely a low spot, carved so that once the stone was placed in its resting place, it would be very difficult to move it out of position. And yet, this morning it was moved. Something was wrong!

They entered the tomb, but found no body. I imagine their thinking at that point. It was not, "He is risen!" No, it was probably, "One final horror! Someone has disturbed the grave and taken Jesus' body!"

4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

Now I am sure they were freaking out. The description here clearly leads us in the direction of angelic beings. The two men's garments glowed. Notice they were clearly not there to attack or threaten. They were there to explain and to comfort. They stood beside the women.

5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Once more, the text assures us that this was not the expectation of Jesus' followers. They acted out of fear and confusion, bowing before the messengers sent from God.

But notice their initial question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" In other words, the angels expected that the women would have known the situation, expected Jesus not to be here. In fact, they can't understand why they would come to a tomb looking for Jesus on the third day after He had died. Coming to the tomb on the third day after He died means they expected Him to still be there. What were they thinking? You look for dead bodies, not living people in cemeteries. The only live people who hang out among the tombs were crazy demoniacs like the man Jesus met earlier, who had all of those demons living in him. Nobody goes to meet people in cemeteries. That would be creepy! So, why were they there? And I'm going to add to their question, "And what are all those smelly things for? Whose body were you planning to care for?"

I'm sure we are all shocked by their question. It seems almost hurtful and demeaning. And yet, there is a sense in which these women, and all those who followed Jesus, should have known better. They should have listened to Jesus' words and taken them seriously. From the gospel writers' accounts, it seems the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities took them more seriously than did the disciples. Shame on us!

6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "

They then state the obvious. Jesus was not there. He had risen from the dead and had decided to go for a walk. They were just there as the tour guides for the people who came with the wrong expectations. But surely, they

wondered, the women would have remembered that Jesus had told them this would all happen. He had been telling them that even before He began His journey in Galilee.

Luke has recorded several pronouncements by Jesus where He told His disciples precisely that. In Luke 9, Jesus asks His disciples who people said that He was. After Peter makes the confession that Jesus was the Christ of God, Jesus responds, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” (Luke 9:22)

Again in chapter 18, Luke records at the outset of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” (18:31-32) Did no one listen to Him? Surely they would remember something so momentous as that! He had given them a detailed account. He referenced all of the OT prophecy concerning the death of the Messiah. Surely, He had in mind Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 (which describes in quite detail the crucifixion scene), and many others. It is clear from the dialogue here that God has an expectation that His followers will actually listen, actually remember, and actually take seriously what He has said. Imagine that! Our King expects us to take seriously what He says to us! Who would have thought?

So here, on the third day, at the last known location of Jesus’ earthly body, His messengers were sent to redirect traffic. The first misguided visitors have arrived and they are already out of patience.

8 Then they remembered his words.

We understand that. Any married couple who have miscommunicated understands that. “Oh yeah, now I remember.” I had one of those just this past

week. I kind of showed that I wasn't really listening when my wife told me something. I wasn't where I was supposed to be when she told me she was ready for my help, and I had not a clue. I couldn't figure out why she was texting me to tell me she was ready. For what???? Yes, we all get this one. Indeed, that is why this whole scene is so important. It shows that the scene had NOT been manipulated. The earliest disciples had NOT staged a scene to make people think He had risen from the dead. No! They didn't even believe it was going to happen even after He had told them the precise order of events multiple times during His ministry. No, the earliest followers were as shocked as anyone.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

Luke records the names of the visitors to the tomb, listing witnesses in case anyone wanted to seek verification. And they told their story to the apostles. So once they told the Eleven, everything switched around. Right?

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

Now, I was told this week to highlight this verse because it refers to men's view of women's words, "Nonsense." But I will refrain from making any such broad characterizations. Instead, I will simply remind you that this is not how you write a book when you are one of the characters in the story. Usually, you make yourself look good. But we see here that the disciples were worse than the women. They were told the whole story, likely including the references to the Jesus' earlier words and the references to the prophets before Jesus. If the women were without excuse, how about the disciples? The women didn't use the word, "nonsense." I chuckle as I reflect on the scene, remembering that probably the most clear description of the whole crucifixion of the Messiah is found in

Isaiah 53, which Shane read for us on Friday evening. And the first verse of Isaiah 53 says what? “Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” It seems that Isaiah predicted even the initial response of the first eyewitnesses, to whom the arm of the LORD had been revealed. I really think God has a great sense of humor. Don’t you?

12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

So, the women didn’t get it. They should have, but they didn’t. The Eleven didn’t get it, even from the women’s report. They really should have, but they thought it was nonsense. And then there’s Peter. He ran to see for himself. Surely he would get it, right? After all, he had the women’s report. He had time to reflect on their words from the angels. He went right away to see for himself. He saw the burial cloths, he saw everything that was supposed to be in the tomb except for one thing, the body of Jesus. Surely this would convince him, right? But no, he went away wondering to himself what had happened.

Are you catching Luke’s point? Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was totally unexpected, even from those who should have known better. Indeed, were we to continue in chapter 24, we would see how Jesus Himself came alongside two of the disciples as they were walking along the road going away from Jerusalem. The text tells us they were kept from recognizing Jesus. But Jesus has a conversation with them, where they were trying to figure out what had happened. Again, Jesus reminded them of what they had been told (by Him!!) earlier about having to suffer, die, and but then enter His glory. (24:26) He even went through all of the OT prophecy with them, explaining how they pointed to Jesus. (Wouldn’t you like to have been in on that conversation???)

Finally, their eyes were opened, they recognized Jesus, believed and went back to tell the disciples. Notice their words to the disciples in v.34, “It is true!

The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” No one was believing anyone. They all had to see for themselves. They wouldn’t believe the women. They wouldn’t believe Peter. They could only believe what they themselves saw.

In fact, Luke goes on to tell us that Jesus enters the scene with them all (except for Thomas), showing His body, inviting them to test it for substance, declaring that He was ready to eat some food. He was real, flesh and bones, able to eat. This was not some dream, not a ghost showing up, impersonating Jesus. This was Jesus Himself, in the flesh, eating food, standing right in front of them, explaining to them once more how He had told them this was all happening exactly as He told them it would. He really was the King He told them He was. The King had returned!

In fact, Luke ends his gospel with the ascension itself, as a fitting conclusion to the gospel of Jesus. Hear these words from Luke and think about the picture they paint about this triumphant return of the King.

[50](#) When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. [51](#) While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. [52](#) Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. [53](#) And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Can you see why Jesus had to rise from the dead? It would not have worked if He had simply completed His work on the cross, died, and gone to heaven. The Church probably would never have gotten off square one. The disciples all left the crucifixion scene defeated, confused, disillusioned. If it had ended there, they would have all gone home like all the others. Indeed, even when the resurrection happened, they were not inclined to believe. No, they had to see for themselves that what Jesus had said about Himself was all true. They had to see all of the OT prophecy that pointed to Him. They had to see the risen Christ with their own eyes so they might believe their King was alive. They had to see for themselves. Paul records that Jesus in those days appeared to 500

of them at one time. They had to know that their King was still alive. They had to experience the triumphant return of the King!

I love Luke's picture here at the ascension. While Jesus was blessing His people, doing things that kings would do, He is lifted from their sight into heaven. In many ways, this is the true return of the King. He was returning, not to the battlefield with His troops, but to His throne.

The King lived, the King died, the King returned from the dead, the King reigns even today from His throne on high. Long live the King!