

The Resurrection of Christ

Luke 23:55-24:16, 30-49

Rev Dr Jos M. Strengholt

Maadi (Egypt) - 12 May 2009

Read Luke 23:55-24:16, 30-49 and look at the reactions of the people who heard about the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

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?"

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

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.

...but they were **kept from recognizing him**.

They were **startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost**.

What confusion among the people who had been following Jesus during the previous years!

These people had heard Jesus preach and teach; they had heard him predict his death and resurrection. They had

seen him do amazing miracles; among those was the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. In spite of this, they did not believe those who witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

How come they did not believe?

Well, is the story of the resurrection of Jesus very credible? He died, after having been tortured, a most gruesome death by being spiked on a cross. The corpse had been placed in a death-cold grave. And this had occurred three days before.

Any talk was Jesus being alive again, was deemed 'nonsense' by the followers of Jesus. It is such an unbelievable story!

But when the disciples saw him with their own eyes, they believed. And this direct experience of the resurrection was the beginning of a tremendous change among the disciples. They now began to read the Bible with new eyes:

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:45-49)

The direct experience that Jesus Christ is a living Lord, was the beginning of new life for the disciples of Jesus. They were immediately made responsible for preaching the Gospel of forgiveness and repentance in the whole world.

It is important to realize that the minds of the disciples were not opened to the Gospel through theological studies, or because they realized that the resurrection was the only logical thing to believe in, or because the Christian worldview made sense.

All this is true and important; but the eyes of the mind and the heart of the disciples were opened through the direct encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ.

How do we show our friends that Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead? Let us, by all means, throw all arguments at them. But only a direct meeting with Jesus Christ will open their hearts and minds. And this encounter, I believe, will usually take place in the community of the church; in the fellowship of Christian believers.

The presence of Jesus Christ is in an intense manner experienced in the worship of the church. The British-Canadian theologian J.I. Packer writes in his beautiful book *Concise Theology* about this:

The church is, was, and always will be a single worshipping community, permanently gathered in the true sanctuary, which is the heavenly Jerusalem, the place of

God's presence. [J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, (Wheaton, 1993), p. 201]

Worship, therefore, brings us as a community directly into heaven where Christ resides. And this is not only true for worship in mighty cathedrals, in any Christian community. It transports us to the place of Christ's presence.

But it is not only the formal worship of the church that bring us closer to Him.

All aspects of the community life of the Church are a carriage of the majesty and love of God. We meet with Him and with Jesus Christ when individual beings are open to one another, communicate with one another, and help one another.

Our fellowship is the vehicle for our relationship with Jesus Christ, so let us do all we can to live together as brothers and sisters in unity; that is where our Lord commands his blessing. That is where He becomes more than a *theory*, but where we encounter Him as the living Lord.