

**Luke 24:45-49 “What is the Good News Anyway?”<sup>\*\*</sup>**

Main Idea: In Luke 24:45-49, Jesus provides us with four spotlights which clarify the gospel for us, the greatest news ever.

Key: Many who know *what* happened at Easter do not know *why* it happened.

**I. Spotlight #1: We see the ingredients of the Gospel (45-46).**

- A. He suffered.

“The suffering of the Messiah was part of the eternal plan of God.”

- B. He rose again.

**II. Spotlight #2: We see the intent of the Gospel (47a).**

- A. We must repent.

“Jesus didn't come merely to patch up our lives, but to change them.”

- B. We may be forgiven.

**III. Spotlight #3: We see the implications of the Gospel (47b-48).**

- A. The good news must be told (47b).

"As Christians, we are not judges or prosecuting attorneys sent to condemn the world. We are witnesses who point to Jesus Christ and tell lost sinners how to be saved." Warren Wiersbe

- B. The good news must not be changed (48).

1. It's rooted in the Person of Christ.
2. It's recorded in the account of the apostles.

**IV. Spotlight #4: We see the influence of the Gospel (49).**

- A. Look for the evidence of God's promise.

- B. Look for the evidence of God's power.

I found a story about a man who had an interesting experience at a doctor's office.<sup>11</sup> The man was a construction worker, and as he entered the office and approached the front desk, the receptionist greeted him with the usual question, “What are you here for?” He replied, “I'm here with shingles.” The receptionist wrote down his name and address and other personal information and asked him to be seated.

A few minutes later, a nurse approached the man and asked, “What do you have?” He responded, “I have shingles.” She led him to an examination room, weighed him, measured his height, and thoroughly questioned him concerning his medical history.

A little while later, another nurse approached the man and asked why he was at the doctor's office. He replied again, “I have shingles.” She took his temperature and blood pressure and told him to remove his clothes and wait for the doctor.

Eventually the doctor entered the examination room and asked the construction worker what he had. "I have shingles," he replied. "Where?" the doctor asked. "In my truck. Where do you want me to put 'em?"

Isn't that how it is some times? We use a word, and mean something by it, while someone else hears the same word and interprets it in an entirely different way.

Take, for instance, the term "Easter." Most people sitting in churches this morning all across the country are familiar with the term "Easter," and even have high regard for it (or they wouldn't be in church). What's more, most people in church know the *facts* of the Easter event. They know that according to the Easter story, Jesus died, and that He rose again. When you mention the word "Easter," one of the scenes that flashes through their minds (along with chocolate bunnies and colored eggs) is an empty tomb in the side of a hill outside of Jerusalem , with a stone next to it that once blocked its entrance.

You know the story of Easter. My aim this morning is not merely to retell the Easter story, but to clarify one important question. *Why?* Why did it happen? Why did it *have* to happen? Here's where the confusion arises. Many who know *what* happened at Easter do not know *why* it happened.

The story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest news of all. It's the event that puts Christianity in a category all by itself. But why did what we call "Easter" happen in the first place?

Thankfully, Jesus Himself tells us why. The very evening He left the tomb Jesus met with His disciples and addressed that very issue. He told them the "good news." He summed up the significance of His work and the message they were to proclaim to the world.

I invite you to consider those words of Jesus this morning by turning to Luke 24. Luke 24 sheds needed light on the fog of confusion that surrounds the significance of Easter. And indeed, there is a fog of confusion...

This week's cover story in the *U. S. News World Report* highlights a recent book by James Tabor, a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. The book is called, *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity*. According to Tabor, Jesus, in partnership with John the Baptist (his cousin) saw himself as the founder not of a new religion but of a worldly royal dynasty. Tabor concludes, "I don't think Jesus taught that he was the savior, believe in me and you will be saved."[\[2\]](#)

For Tabor, the Jesus who really existed is not the Jesus we read about in the four gospel accounts, for those accounts are theological interpretations that embellish the true Jesus and turn him into a sort of fictional, inspiring character.

Of course, what Tabor is doing is nothing new. As far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so-called enlightenment scholars began to suggest that the Jesus we read about in the New Testament didn't really exist as presented but was the creation of second century folks with vivid imaginations. Ironically, in his 1906 book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Albert Schweitzer concluded that all his major predecessors tended to find a Jesus who suited their own personal and ideological needs.[\[3\]](#)

More recently, Dan Brown used a similar perspective to produce a best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, which perports that the gospel accounts are fraudulent and the traditional understanding of Jesus inaccurate. Granted, it's just a novel, but society's response to the novel demonstrates the continuing confusion concerning the true identity of Jesus—and the speculation will only increase after *The Da Vinci Code* is released as a major motion picture on May 19.

Just recently the *Gospel of Judas* has become news. In the 1970's a sixty-six page codex containing a Judas' fragment was found in Egypt . This document has now been translated into English under the guidance of the National Geographic Society. Some scholars hail the find as the most important religious archaeological discovery in sixty years. The document indicates that Judas was not a villain but a hero. In one passage the Coptic manuscript states that Jesus told Judas, "But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me." And elsewhere

Jesus takes Judas aside to tell him the “mysteries of the kingdom.” In actuality, although this document is probably a genuine second century document, it doesn’t prove anything other than what scholars have long known, that in the second century A.D. there was a spinoff of Christianity called Gnosticism that tried to use Christian teaching to support their Greek notions of spirituality.

The fact that people have tried to reinvent Jesus isn’t new. What’s particularly disturbing is that in our day people are concluding, “Who was the real Jesus? It doesn’t really matter. As long as what you believe about Jesus helps you, it’s fine to believe it. The important thing isn’t truth but *your experience*.<sup>15</sup>”

But objective truth does matter. Would you go to a doctor that said... “It doesn’t matter what the medical books say. The important thing is that I feel really good about my chances to help you right now.” No way! What we believe must be based on truth.

So back to our original question. Why did Jesus live, die, and rise from the dead? What is the good news anyway? In Luke 24:45-49, Jesus provides us with four spotlights which cut through the fog and answer the question clearly.

### I. Spotlight #1: We see the Ingredients of the Gospel (45-46).

Notice verse 45, “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.” Briefly, allow me to put this statement into perspective. It’s Sunday evening, and the tomb has been empty since sun-up. In the 24th chapter, Luke records for us the events of Jesus’ Resurrection Day.

Early that morning, some women went to the grave intending to anoint Jesus’ body, but were shocked to find, not a body, but an empty tomb and two angels (1-12). The angels both asked and told them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen (5-6)!“

The women reported their discovery to the eleven disciples in verses 9-12, who, as you’ll recall, did not believe their story. Peter decided to go check out the tomb himself (12). Later in the day, the risen Jesus appeared to two disciples who were traveling on the road to Emmaus (13-32).

“What are you talking about?” He asked them in verse 17.

One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days (18)?”

Jesus responded in verses 25-26, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” James Tabor isn’t the first man to be confused about Jesus. Cleopas and his unnamed partner couldn’t make sense of the facts as they knew them.

So Jesus helped them in verse 27, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

The final Resurrection Day appearance recorded by Luke took place in Jerusalem (33-49). It’s this episode which is of particular interest to us in this study.

Verse 33 informs us that the eleven disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem . Although the Gospels nowhere say so explicitly, it’s quite likely that the house in which they met that evening was the same house in which Jesus observed the Last Supper with His disciples three days before.<sup>15</sup> It was also the house which was to be the central meeting place for the Jerusalem church in the weeks to come—the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark (see Acts 1:13; 12:12).

There they are, the disciples in their bewilderment, when all of the sudden Jesus appeared (36). They were

terrified, thinking they had seen a spirit-being. Jesus calmed their racing hearts by inviting them to touch the wounds in His hands and feet, and by eating a piece of broiled fish right before their very eyes. No doubt about it. It was Jesus!

But what had happened? Why had He died? And why was He now back with them? These and a thousand other questions clouded their minds.

Then Jesus gave them a crash course in Old Testament theology, verse 44 explains, and revealed that the Law, the prophets, and the psalms—the threefold division of the Hebrew Scriptures—*it all pointed to Him*.

At that point, it began to click. Until this point, the disciples' confusion continued. They heard Jesus' explanation but it still didn't make sense. That is, until Jesus, in His grace, opened their minds, as verse 45 states, "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

Throughout His ministry, the disciples listened to Jesus' words but didn't get it, not the part about His death and resurrection. But now they do. Because of supernatural illumination. Jesus opened their minds. Now it made sense.

By the way, you will never "get it" either apart from the sovereign, gracious unveiling work of God. The natural man doesn't receive the things of God, nor can he (1 Cor 2:14). You can't figure God out on your own. You can't reach up to God. He must reach down to you. Humble yourself, call out to Him, and He will do just that.

You see, until that moment, the disciples saw but didn't see. Just like many of us here did before the Spirit regenerated our minds.

Do you know what Jesus did right after He removed the blinders from the disciples' eyes? He turned on spotlight #1, and summed up the ingredients of the gospel. What are the ingredients? To answer that question, Jesus pointed His disciples to the Old Testament Scriptures, and identified two activities which He fulfilled as the Messiah.

#### A. He suffered.

Verse 46 explains, "He told them, 'This is what is written.'" Stop there. Throughout His ministry, Jesus constantly quoted Scripture. He does so here as well. Why? In part, to remind the disciples what their authority was to be once He left them. The Scriptures.

The Scriptures reveal Christ to us. The Scriptures reveal the will of Christ for us. Since we weren't there 2,000 years ago, and since we can't see Him now, we are indebted to the permanent, unchanging record of His Holy Word.

Jesus continues in verse 46, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day..." The good news is summed up by two activities, the first of which being that the Messiah would suffer. And indeed, He did. Jesus lived a perfect life and then gave that life in a painful death.

Never forget that the cross was not forced on God. It was not an emergency measure to which God resorted when the mob in Jerusalem got out of hand. No... *The suffering of the Messiah was part of the eternal plan of God*, predicted in detail in Old Testament prophecy.

The prophet Isaiah wrote of Messiah's suffering, more than 700 years before the fact, writing this in Isaiah 52:14, "Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness."

And then Isaiah described the suffering servant this way in Isaiah 53:3-5, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

As predicted by Isaiah and the other prophets, so it happened. The Messiah suffered and eventually died. But the gospel includes a second activity which Jesus identified in verse 46. “The Christ will suffer *and rise from the dead on the third day.*”

### **B. He rose again.**

This too was predicted in the Old Testament. Psalm 16:10 states, “Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” God did not allow His Son to remain in the grave. The empty tomb is proof that God accepted the atoning work His Son accomplished on the cross. Jesus had cried, “It is finished!” And the resurrection proved that God agreed with that assessment.

Here are the non-negotiable ingredients of the gospel. Having lived a life without sin, Jesus suffered and died for sin. But He didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead the third day.

A while back *Time* magazine ran an account of the "Jesus Seminar" (which I'll refer to again in a moment). The co-chairman of the Seminar concluded that after the crucifixion, Jesus' corpse was probably laid in a shallow grave, barely covered with dirt, and subsequently eaten by wild dogs. The man concluded that the story of Jesus' resurrection was merely the result of "wishful thinking" on the part of the disciples.[\[6\]](#)

Is that true? I remind you that after Jesus was crucified, the disciples were like frightened children. The last thing on their minds was inventing a story about their Master's resurrection. The suggestion is ludicrous. The fact is, even after they did see the Risen Christ the disciples still needed Jesus to shine the first spotlight on their minds so they would grasp the fact that His suffering and resurrection were not accidental but *essential ingredients* to the gospel.

That raises the question for us, why? Why were they essential?

## II. Spotlight #2: We see the Intent of the Gospel (47a).

Jesus sums up the intent of the gospel with two words in verse 47: “repentance” and “forgiveness” [KJV ‘remission’]. Why did Jesus suffer, die, and rise again? His intent is to see two things happen in our lives.

### **A. We must repent.**

Verse 47 begins—“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name...” Jesus gave His life for a specific reason, to rescue people from their sins.

The word “repent” is a significant yet largely ignored word in our day. It reminds us of a vital truth...

*Jesus didn't come merely to patch up our lives. He came to change them.*

In His earthly ministry Jesus called people to repentance. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” He said in Matthew 4:17.

The word “repent” means to change one's mind or purpose. In the early church, calling people to repentance was not optional but standard equipment in gospel invitations. For instance, in his sermon in Acts 3 Peter concluding with this call, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”

There's a town called Wabush in a remote portion of Labrador , Canada , which was completely isolated for some time. Until a road was cut through the wilderness to reach it. The town has only one road leading into it, and thus, only one road leading out of it. If you traveled the unpaved road for six to eight hours to get to Wabush, and wanted to leave, there's only one way, *by turning around.*

At birth, each of us arrives in a town called Sin. As in Wabush, there is only one way out, a road built by God Himself. But in order to take that road, *one must first turn around*. That complete about-face is what the Bible calls *repentance*.<sup>[7]</sup>

Listen, friends. You don't need to change your life in order to come to Christ, for you lack the power to change in a way that will please God. However, if you come to Christ with no desire to be changed, to yield your will to His will, you've missed the intent of the gospel. Jesus says we must repent. Then what?

### **B. We may be forgiven.**

Notice verse 47 again, “And *repentance and forgiveness of sins* will be preached in his name...” The word “forgiveness” means “pardon, dismissal, or release.” In the NIV and KJV, the words “repentance” and “forgiveness” [KJV ‘remission’] are parallel, but the Greek text indicates that repentance is a prerequisite for forgiveness. The NASB captures this sense, “That repentance FOR forgiveness of sins should be preached.”

This is amazing! We can have our sins removed. We can be clean. We can be free from guilt. How? By doing something for God? No. Jesus said the forgiveness of sins is available to us “*in His name*.” In other words, we’re forgiven by turning from living for ourselves and trusting in what Jesus did for us.

Are you wrestling with guilt in your life? Do you feel the heavy weight of sin bearing down on your chest? Do you want to be cleansed and set free? You can be, no matter who you are or what you’ve done. Repent, turn from following the self-centered road of sin that leads to destruction, and follow the road that leads to Christ.

Jesus gives us a third spotlight which clarifies the gospel for us. In the first two, He reveals the ingredients and the intent of the gospel. In the third...

## III. Spotlight #3: We see the Implications of the Gospel (47b-48).

Jesus specifies two implications.

### **A. The good news must be told (47b).**

In verse 47 the Lord plainly says that the message of repentance and forgiveness is not to be hoarded but proclaimed. “*Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem* .”

Someone has said, “The church was not left to live forever in the upper room; it was sent out into all the world.”<sup>[8]</sup>

In fact, Jesus gave the first disciples clear instructions in verse 48, “You are witnesses of these things.” What does a witness do? He simply tells what he saw.

Suppose you received a summons tomorrow to be a witness in a court of law. What would be your purpose in the legal hearing? It wouldn’t be to give your opinion on the décor of the furniture in the courtroom, nor to share your insights with the judge on how he should run his operation. You have been called to do one very simple thing. The court wants to hear the testimony of what you have seen and heard. That’s what a witness does.

The word “witness” is used in some form 29 times in the book of Acts. Warren Wiersbe points out, “*As Christians, we are not judges or prosecuting attorneys sent to condemn the world. We are witnesses who point to Jesus Christ and tell lost sinners how to be saved.*”<sup>[9]</sup>

Let’s get down to where we live. In verse 47, Jesus told Peter, James, John, and the rest to start spreading the good news. But where? “Beginning at Jerusalem ,” He said. Why Jerusalem ? True, because Jerusalem is significant

in God's redemptive plan, but why else? What was Jerusalem ? It was where they were!

The good news must be told *starting where we are*. Do you have neighbors who have never heard you speak about Jesus? I regret to admit I do. Do you have family members with whom you have never shared the greatest news you know? What are you going to do about it? Jesus says the good news must be told. Furthermore...

## B. The good news must not be changed (48).

Though verse 48 is short, don't overlook its importance. To the eleven disciples, Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things." What things? The things Jesus just talked about. The things the Scriptures predicted and He accomplished, namely, *the cross, the tomb, the rolled-away-stone*. You are witnesses of these things.

That statement defines the gospel for us. It makes two things perfectly clear about the gospel.

1. *It's rooted in the Person of Christ.* Jesus said, "Go tell the world about Me." That's the good news. When we preach the gospel, we're not offering people a religion. We're offering them an opportunity to have a relationship with a Person!

2. *It's recorded in the account of the apostles.* Remember the context of verse 48. "You are witnesses." "You" refers to whom? To those disciples who had been with Jesus for three years, namely, His apostles.

You say, "How can we be sure that the gospel record is accurate?" The answer is because the apostles wrote down their eye-witness account just like Jesus told them to. In fact, the Spirit of God produced four historical, biographical accounts of the life of Jesus: Matthew wrote one, as did Mark (reflecting Peter's perspective), Luke (who interviewed eyewitnesses; see Luke 1:2), and John.

Please realize that one of Satan's primary tactics is to attack the historical integrity of the gospel. What's happening today with *The Da Vinci Code* and the *Gospel of Judas* isn't anything new.

In 1985, Robert Funk organized the "*Jesus Seminar*" with the goal being (in his own words), to "set Jesus free" from the "scriptural and creedal prisons in which we have entombed him. We aspire to no less than to roll away the stone from the door of the rock-cut tomb."[\[10\]](#)

The "*Jesus Seminar*" sought to rediscover Jesus by re-examining the gospels and determining what was historical and what was not. The seminar, made up of 50 religious professors, concluded that no more than 20% of the sayings and even fewer of the deeds attributed to Jesus in the Bible are authentic. Here's what these "scholars" eliminated from Jesus' life: the Lord's prayer, the sayings from the cross, all of His claims to divinity, the virgin birth, most of his miracles, and (not surprisingly) his bodily resurrection.

Funk says it is time to "reinvent Christianity," and concludes, "Most church officials regard us as a threat. But then, the Roman [Catholic] church regarded Luther as a threat. That's the way it is with reformers."

What's alarming is that those who are tampering with the life of Jesus still identify themselves as "Christians." For instance, John Dominic Crossan, a professor emeritus at DePaul University in Chicago , wrote popular books in which he suggests that Jesus was a revolutionary peasant who resisted economic and social tyranny. He was a Jewish cynic who traveled from town to town teaching unconventional wisdom. Listen to Crossan's conclusion, "There has never been a more empowering figure than Jesus. If you are empowered by Jesus' life, in my judgment that makes you a Christian."[\[11\]](#)

May I ask you something? Is that what Jesus said He came to do, to empower us? No. He came to call us to repent and believe in Him. Are we permitted to reinvent Him? Absolutely not. He calls us to believe in Him as He has revealed Himself in the apostle's record which He authorized when He said, "You are witnesses of these things."

How can you tell if your life has truly been impacted by the significance of Easter? We find the answer as we approach the fourth spotlight.

#### IV. Spotlight #4: We see the Influence of the Gospel (49).

In verse 49 Jesus speaks one final time, “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.” Obviously, these instructions had special significance for those disciples in the upper room. They were to wait in Jerusalem until the One promised by the Father came, a reference to the Helper, the Resident Counselor, the Holy Spirit. He would enable the early Christians. He would guarantee the success of the gospel. So Jesus told the disciples to wait.

By application, however, Jesus is saying something to us. How can you tell if you have really come to grips with the significance of Easter? How can you tell if the Resurrected Christ is real in your life? Verse 49 asks us to look for two evidences.

##### **A. Look for the evidence of God's promise.**

Jesus didn't expect His followers to do evangelism in their own strength. The fact is, as Wiersbe again points out, “Witnessing is not something that we do for the Lord; it is something that He does through us; *if* we are filled with the Holy Spirit.”

May I ask you a question? Do you see the evidence of God's promise, the Holy Spirit, in your life? What's the evidence? It's called the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness...” The fruit of the Spirit is the life of Christ being reproduced in us.

Has he changed your life? Be honest. Can you look back and see a difference?

##### **B. Look for the evidence of God's power.**

Jesus told the disciples that they would be clothed with power from on high. Have you experienced that power, the power of God in your life? It can be yours today. How? By responding to the gospel. Repent and turn to Christ. Then live for Him, by the Spirit's help, and make Him known to the world!

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[\[1\]](#) Told by J. MacArthur, "Grace to You" Feb 16, 1996

[\[2\]](#) *U.S. News & World Report*, April 17, 2006, p. 50.

[\[3\]](#) Observation summarized in *U.S. News & World Report*, April 17, 2006, p. 50.

[\[4\]](#) Taken from *U.S. News & World Report*, April 17, 2006, p. 52.

[\[5\]](#) Wilcock, 210

[\[6\]](#) See *Jesus Under Fire*, 142

[\[7\]](#) Brian Weatherdon, *Leadership Journal*

[\[8\]](#) Barclay, 298

[\[9\]](#) Wiersbe, p. 280.

[\[10\]](#) Comment in *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr 8, 1996, p. 48

[\[11\]](#) Ibid, p. 52.