

# NOTES for PREACHING

## Second Sunday of Easter | Doug Beacham

### Introduction

Be aware that the Orthodox churches (Greek, Russian, etc.) use a different calendar than us who are part of the Western church tradition (Roman Catholic, most Protestants, etc.). For those of you in areas where there are Orthodox Christians, they will celebrate Easter on Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>.<sup>i</sup>

There are six Sundays between now and Pentecost Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup>. During these weeks I am going to focus on the following:

Sunday, April 19: Acts 1:1-3 and the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God during the forty days prior to His Ascension. We will also use Luke 24:13-27.

Sunday, April 26: Luke 24:28-43.

Sunday, May 3: John 20:19-31.

Sunday, May 10: John 21:1-14.

Sunday, May 17: John 21:15-25.

Sunday, May 24: Ascension Sunday, Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:4-11.

Sunday, May 31: Pentecost Sunday, Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-4.

### New Testament Texts

#### *Acts 1:1-3 – Key Points*

1. This is Luke's second volume of his two-volume work on the life of Jesus. The first volume, which has a similar introduction in Luke 1:1-4, was primarily about the life and ministry of Jesus. The second volume, titled the Acts of the Apostles, is about the life of Jesus through His body, the church.
2. Both volumes are addressed to "Theophilus" (which means 'friend of God,' Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). In Luke 1 we are told that . . .
  - a. Many accounts of the life of Jesus had already been written (1:1). This is important as it shows that while the oral traditions were the initial basis for spreading the life of Jesus, that by the time of Luke is aware of other "orderly" narratives. I believe Luke is referring to at least Mark's account as well as other then known accounts.
  - b. Luke passed along that he received his information from people who from the beginning were *autoptes* (eyewitnesses; notice that the English word autopsy comes from this – someone who sees, or saw, up close the details). They were not only eyewitnesses, they were also "ministers of the word", *huperetes* (servants) of the *logos* (word). This word is used in Acts 26:16 where Paul gave the words of Jesus to him when confronted by the

risen Lord on the road to Damascus. Paul also used the same word in 1 Corinthians 4:1 in describing himself as “servants and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Interestingly the footnote indicates that this word is from the medical field.<sup>ii</sup>

- c. In Luke 1:3 he used another word found in the medical field of Luke’s day, the word *akribos*, translated “perfect” in the NKJV. The previously cited book by Rogers writes that this word “was used to indicate the accurate information gained by a doctor questioning the patient.”<sup>iii</sup>
- d. Finally, in Luke 1:3, Theophilus is introduced as “most excellent.” It was a term indicating an official or someone viewed as having a higher social standing than the speaker.<sup>iv</sup>
3. In the second volume (Acts), Luke sets the stage of Jesus’ continued ministry through the Holy Spirit in the church. Theophilus needed no further introduction other than that the book was written to him. The goal of the second volume is described in 1:1-3.
4. Luke 24 was Luke’s account of the resurrection and Jesus’ appearance to disciples. It is likely Luke knew of similar accounts, such as those mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:4-8. But Luke focused on a few appearances of the risen Lord, and consistently connected them to further revelation of the Old Testament Scriptures. The chapter concluded with a brief account of the Ascension (24:50-53) and in anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (24:49).
5. The key portion of the Acts 1:1-3 passage for us is emphasized in 1:3, Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them (the disciples and others) during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”  
Notice:
  - a. The connection to “forty days.” Forty is a constant theme in Scripture. In Genesis 7:4 there was rain for forty days and forty nights, the flood was on the earth forty days, after the tops of mountains were seen, Noah opened the ark after forty days (7:12, 17; 8:6). It took forty days to embalm Joseph in Egypt (50:3). Israel ate manna forty years (Ex. 16:35). Moses was on Mt. Sinai forty days and night (Ex. 24:18). Moses interceded for Israel forty days and nights (Deut. 9:25). The 12 spies were in the promised land forty days (Num. 14:34). Jonah prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days (Jon. 3:4). Jesus was tempted in the wilderness forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:2). After his resurrection Jesus was on earth forty days (Acts 1:3).
  - b. It was about March 13 of this year that the entire nation began to shut down over the spread of COVID-19. I don’t want to over spiritualize this, but the week after Sunday April 19 will be 40 days (counting from March 13 it will be April 21). It seems that the number 40, as in 40 days or years, is associated with a time of testing and trials. Tests and trials are meant to purify us, to remove dross and prepare us for what is coming.
6. Jesus visibly appeared to His disciples during these forty days, “by many infallible proofs.” Rogers comments, “In logic demonstrative proof; in medical language demonstrative evidence, a sure symptom; in legal language proof from which there was no getting away, an indication which is irrefutable and indisputable.”<sup>v</sup> The Gospel accounts record many of these

various revelations of Jesus. These were not “visions” in which Jesus appeared. They were actual manifestations of His resurrected body where the wounds of the crucifixion could be seen and touched.

7. Possibly Pentecost is alluded to in Acts 1:2 with the reference to Jesus “through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.”
8. Jesus primary teaching in these forty days was “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” This is where you should take time to read the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13:1-52; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18. We know that “Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14, 15). Acts 28 concludes with the Apostle Paul doing exactly the same thing as Jesus, “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (28:31).

*Luke 24:13-27 – Key Points*

1. Luke 24:1-12 is the Easter Sunday resurrection account. It corresponds closely to the accounts in the other three Gospel records. In Luke’s account are two verses that set the stage for much of the emphasis in the remainder of the chapter:
  - a. 24:8, “And they remembered His words.” It is the women (24:10) who heard the angelic message and first believed. Note that this connects with 23:55, 56 as the women prepared to anoint the body of Jesus. It is the women who first remembered Jesus words, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (24:7; see also 9:22, 44; 18:31-33).
  - b. 24:11, “And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” This is the response of the “apostles,” the men Jesus had chosen, to the report of the women.
2. The remainder of Luke 24 is about how the truth comes to be believed and understood; that is, it is about the need for, and power of, revelation.
3. The first rejoinder to the “idle tales” is found in the text under consideration, Luke 24:13-27, commonly called the Road to Emmaus. There are two men on this journey, the same day as our Easter Sunday. One is named Cleopas and the other is unnamed. In reality, both are essentially unknown.
4. Whoever they are, they are traveling in a pair, possibly for protection on a seven mile journey, or as likely, followers of Jesus who are obeying His command that they travel together (Luke 10:1). They “conversed and reasoned” (24:14, 15) about what had transpired over the past few days.
5. Jesus Himself joined them in the journey “but their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him” (24:18). This is characteristic of Jesus’ appearances. It’s an amazing aspect of the resurrected body and presence, a presence that transcends normal human interaction. It is the relationship of the new creation and the old creation in the dynamic of relationship.

6. The conversation is led by the veiled Jesus, who seeks their understanding of what has occurred. Jesus turns the discussion to them with “What things?” (24:19).
7. They reply with what they understand of who Jesus is: He “was a Prophet mighty in deed and word,” He was “condemned to death, and crucified.” (24:19, 20).
8. Their Messianic hope was described in v. 21, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” This is an important phrase as it is picked up in Acts 1:6. It is THE question on their minds: will Israel be redeemed? This is an important point and more than their first century anti-Roman political statement. It was actually a central theological question related to the authority and truth of the Torah and the Prophets.
1. The passage concludes with Jesus addressing their “slow hearts,” “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (24:25, 26). Following that statement, Jesus began “at Moses and all the Prophets,” and “expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (24:27). What Jesus suffered is described in Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and by implication the death of sacrificial animals (Moses). During this seven-mile walk, these two disciples were the first students in Jesus’ forty days intensive class about Himself, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the kingdom of God.

### Preaching Thoughts

1. If you sense the Holy Spirit leading you with these texts, this can be a way of sharing with your congregation what it means to discern the voice of the risen Lord in the journey of life. I know that communicating via video is different than having people present with you. It’s difficult for them, your listeners, as well. Distractions are far more common in a home setting. So you may want to consider writing something that your listeners can read as well as listen to you. A short outline may help keep them engaged.
2. If you focus on the kingdom of God themes, remember that this phrase refers to God’s reign, God’s rule, over His creation. It’s a powerful reminder that sin, disease, death, do not have the last word in this world. The kingdom of God is not just a New Testament reality – it runs through the Bible, starting in Genesis 1, 2, and ending in Revelation 22.
3. The question of belief, of understanding, is central in Luke 24. It’s the questions that countless people are asking in this time. Where is God? What is really occurring to us? What’s the new normal? This can be addressed by using the Luke 24 Road to Emmaus story. The question of recognizing Jesus is significant. How can we hear His answer to our questions? How do we make sense of what has, and is, occurring?
4. Jesus answered their questions by taking them to the promises of God throughout Scripture. From Genesis to Malachi (notice Jesus taught them from “all the prophets”) there are consistent themes of divine purpose. Those themes run through Israel to Israel’s Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Israel’s purposes are fulfilled in Him, and through Him Israel will fulfill her destiny (Romans 9-11). Those promises are more than just our personal salvation and deliverance. Those promises are God’s redeeming act for the whole world.

5. While I think we should be careful about over spiritualizing the “forty days,” and the number forty, I do find it interesting that we are near the forty days mark related to how the USA has responded to the COVID-19 crisis. For anyone reading this outside the USA, that number may not be applicable. If I were to use this in preaching, I would use it in the sense of what is the Lord teaching us during this time.

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<sup>i</sup> The Orthodox use a combination of the Julian calendar, or what is called the Revised Julian calendar. The Western Church uses the Gregorian calendar. That is why some Pentecostals and evangelicals in eastern countries (Russia, Ukraine, etc.) celebrate Easter on a different Sunday than Pentecostals in the West. As you have already figured out, that affects when Pentecost is celebrated.

<sup>ii</sup> *Huperetes* was also used of people who had “practical experience of the facts” and “used of medical assistants or attendants.” See Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998) p. 106.

<sup>iii</sup> Rogers, p. 106.

<sup>iv</sup> Rogers, p. 106.

<sup>v</sup> Rogers, p.229.