

A LENTEN STUDY OF JESUS' LAST WEEK
IN JERUSALEM

HE IS NOT HERE

DAY 1: DOING THEIR DUTY (LUKE 24:1-7)

Some things are not fun to do, but they have to be done anyway. Whether it's facing the dentist, or writing a long paper, the process is definitely not easy. Possibly the hardest thing we have to do is take care of the details in order to bury a loved one. Things like picking out the casket, ordering flowers, and planning funeral services are difficult to do, but are done out of the love for and duty to the one we've lost.

Those who had followed Jesus had experienced the worst outcome possible. They had watched Him triumphantly enter the city of Jerusalem to the cheers of the crowd. And by the end of the week, they watched Him be arrested, found guilty as a criminal, mistreated, and executed. They watched Him face an excruciatingly painful and humiliating death, but could do nothing for Him. The women who had been with Jesus in Galilee even followed along as His body was carried to a burial chamber and placed inside. And, because of the lateness of the hour and the approaching Sabbath, they again could do nothing. So, at sunrise, when the Sabbath had ended, the women rushed to the tomb to do the one thing they knew how to do for Him . . . to prepare His body in death. Read Luke 24:1-7. The women found the tomb empty and the body gone. And they heard from God's messengers that Jesus Christ could not be held in death, but had risen to life, just as He had promised.

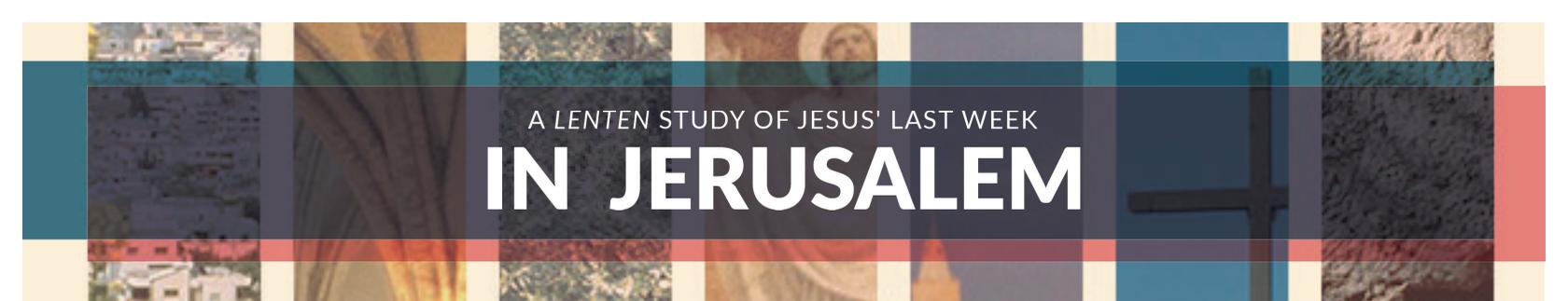
The Easter message the women heard at the tomb is one for us as well . . . He is not here! He is not dead. He has arisen from the grave to stand at the right hand of God the Father. Halleluia! Jesus lives!

DAY 2: PASSING THE WORD (LUKE 24:8-11)

Is there anything better than sharing good news? With social media, we help celebrate birthdays, and friendships, and all sorts of newsworthy trivia . . . new cars, new friends, athletic victories, places we've gone . . . It's easy to jump in and help celebrate when things are going well.

Read Luke 24:8-11. Can you imagine how the women must have felt as they rushed to find the disciples, and the others who had followed Jesus, and share their news? They must have been brimming with excitement and anticipation as they recounted their experiences. Yet, the disciples didn't believe them! After all they had heard Jesus teach about what would happen to Him, they doubted that He was alive.

Underline verse 11, especially the words "an idle tale." Have you ever responded to the news of Jesus as if it was only an idle tale? Why?



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DAY 3: THERE'S ALWAYS ONE (LUKE 24:12)

There seems to always be one person who responds differently than the others . . . who doesn't follow the crowd, who asks the tough questions, who pushes the boundaries. Those are the individuals who seem to be more spontaneous, more impulsive, more of a leader, and sometimes, even a troublemaker.

Read Luke 24:12. The apostle Peter was “the one” in the group of the disciples. He asked the tough questions. He jumped up to protect Jesus and even took a sword and cut off someone's ear. He was impetuous, impulsive, passionate, and emotional. And, when he heard that Jesus was alive, he didn't ask questions or suggest the news was an idle tale. Instead, he ran to the tomb to see for himself. He saw the empty tomb and the burial linens left behind, and then he knew . . . that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. His spontaneous actions tell us everything about Peter—he knew what Jesus had said and he was ready to believe it. He just needed to see it for himself.

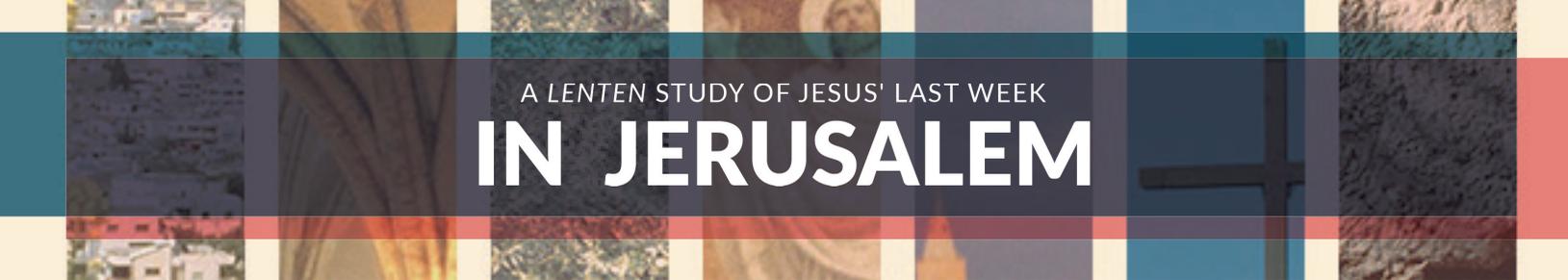
How have you seen the evidence of Jesus' resurrection for yourself?

DAY 4: PEACE TO YOU (LUKE 24:36-43)

At my church, we do the traditional passing of the peace in each service. But, the time has become more than just passing the peace. It's become a time of greeting, of hugs and blessings, of comfort to those who grieve, of joy for the return of those who have been away, of concern for those who are sick or struggling with life. It's become a time of holy noise as the body of Christ passes the peace of Jesus Christ to one another.

Read Luke 24:36-42. Jesus suddenly appeared before the disciples and greeted them with the words, “Peace to You!” I don't think He expected them to respond quietly or reverently. In fact, it makes us wonder that He saw their reaction to His appearance as a demonstration that they doubted that He'd do what He had told them He would do. And then, Jesus did another surprising thing . . . He invited them to touch His hands and His feet, which carried the scars from the nails that had been hammered through them. Luke doesn't record when the disciples began to believe what had happened, but it couldn't have been a peaceful time when they did.

What an amazing time the disciples must have had that evening with their risen Lord. They moved from sorrow to joy, and from doubt to belief. As the old hymn says, “Halleluiah, what a Savior!”



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DAY 5: WITNESSES (LUKE 24:44-49)

Don't you love hearing the details about something you've missed? Maybe it was the food fight that broke out in the lunchroom on the day you were out sick, or the teacher who got upset and left the room crying. Whatever it was, we want to know everything that happened.

Read Luke 24:44-49. Jesus had appeared before many witnesses after His resurrection. But then, He turned the idea of being a witness around. It wasn't enough to just witness the risen Lord. Those who had witnessed what He had done for them were now to be the witness for others.

Jesus Christ is Lord of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Go and give witness of all He has done for you.