

EASTER 2015
LUKE 24:1-19

Easter Witnesses – a sketch

Welcome to this Global News 24 special from Jerusalem; there have been some amazing events here in the last few hours, but no-one seems to be able to explain them. There are some claims going around that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified on Friday by the Roman soldiers as the crowd cried for His death - that this Jesus is alive again. We have some witnesses:

The first witnesses: I have here three women, represented by Mary:

- Who are you? *I'm Mary Magdalene.*
- What is your connection to Jesus? *We are friends and relatives of Jesus*
- How do you know he is alive? *We watched him die on the cross, we knew he was buried in the tomb in the garden here, it was a rush to get him buried before the Sabbath began, and his body was not properly prepared. We've come down this morning to finish that job, but he has gone! He's not here. 2 angels tell us that he's alive.*
- How has your life been changed as result? *We were afraid at first, but then we met Jesus. He met me in the garden, though I thought He was someone else to begin with. We walked with Him and talked with Him. He is alive, for ever. He will always with us.*

Thank you very much; I now have a second witness: Peter:

- Who are you? *My name is Simon, but I'm also known as Peter*
- What is your connection to Jesus? *I am one of Jesus' closest followers; I saw him feed thousands, walk on water (he even helped me walk on water); then I saw him arrested and I even denied knowing who Jesus was three times (said shamefacedly).*
- How do you know he is alive? *The women said that the tomb was empty and that the angels had told them Jesus is alive; they also told the women to tell us that Jesus was alive. We also met Jesus today; we saw Him; we talked to Him. I knew it was Jesus and not a ghost!*
- How has your life been changed as a result? *Jesus has forgiven me for letting him down and has given me a new task to help others become followers of Jesus.*

Thank you both very much indeed for talking to Global News 24 and this breaking news story about Jesus of Nazareth. It certainly is amazing; these people know what they have seen; they are convinced that Jesus is alive and their lives will never be the same again.

I Believe

Take an Easter Egg, and find someone to help you with this:!

What do you believe about this Easter Egg?

- *It is made of chocolate*
- *It has Chocolate buttons inside*
- *It tastes good*

How do you know? How do we know that inside this box there is an egg made of chocolate? How do we know that there are chocolate buttons inside? How do we know that it tastes good?

It says so on the box! The box tells you that this is an Easter Egg made of chocolate, that it has chocolate buttons inside!

Well, the box might be wrong! So how do you know? *We can open box and see for yourself!* So we open box and we see what's inside – indeed it is a chocolate egg with chocolate buttons. So now we know that there is a chocolate egg and sweets.

But how do we know that it tastes good? *The only way to know that is to ... eat it! We did and it does taste great!*

What do we believe about Easter? We're told that Jesus died and that He rose again; we're told that the tomb was empty, and we've heard some stories from the people who were there and saw for themselves that Jesus is alive. The challenge is for us to believe these stories for ourselves so that this is not just something we hear, but something we believe for ourselves about Jesus; He is not just Jesus the Saviour and Jesus the Lord, but He is Jesus *my* Saviour and Jesus *my* Lord.

Who moved the stone? This is the picture on our Easter card, but it is also the title of a quite well-known book about Easter. Frank Morison set out to write a book that said the resurrection was nonsense and there must be another explanation. As he looked at the stories and read them and tried to find other explanations, he decided that the only answer to the question is the one Bible gives. Who moved stone? God did when He raised Jesus. He moved the stone to let the people in to see that Jesus is not there anymore.

Luke 24:13-19

4 boys on their way to school in the morning, walking together; as they walk they're talking - what are they talking about? They are bouncing a football, sometimes! Are they talking about football? Or television? Or Minecraft? I can't hear them, but they're talking is full of energy and fun and sometimes they take time out from their talking to one another to say hello to me! The Green Strollers – our walking group, going out to enjoy walking; you can do it on your own, but its fun to do it together; what do you talk about as you walk? You'll talk about all kinds of things, I'm sure; putting the world to rights; putting the church to rights too perhaps! A young couple go for a walk - to find some place where they can talk together without someone else overhearing them, it's romantic, they are holding hands, whispering, giggling, making plans for their future. There are all kinds of ways in which we go walking!

Two people are walking home. It is Easter Sunday evening and they're walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to their home in a village called Emmaus; they are walking and talking, going over again and again all that has happened that day in Jerusalem. They are going over it again and again in the hope that they might find some clarity - what has happened, actually? What does it all mean? They are going over it again and again, but it hasn't helped. Maybe, they are so engrossed in their conversation that they don't notice the stranger coming to walk alongside them, sharing their journey. As He walks beside them, He asks them what they're talking about. It comes pouring out: their hopes are dashed and disappointed; their friend is gone and they are not sure about the rumours of Jesus being alive. There is sad dismay about the conversation, at these hopes being dashed; they had hoped Jesus would redeem His people but now He has been crucified. It is a very sad conversation, indeed.

But then the mood changes because Jesus begins to talk to them about Himself, though didn't know it was Him. They discover from Him that the bible is the key to unlock all kinds of mysteries about God, Jesus, faith and life, and as they listen to Jesus tell them the Bible story about Himself, their mood changes. They are no longer dismayed, no longer disappointed, but they said "*were not our hearts burning*" with joy, hope and faith as Jesus talked to them and then as later they recognised Him when He broke bread in their home. They ran back to the city to tell the others: "We have seen Lord." "We know; we've seen Him too!" Jesus is crucified and this is how God will redeem world.

I love the picture of walking! Jesus is with us everywhere we go. Jesus is with us when we're walking to get to school, or walking with our friends, or out for a stroll in the evening to relax. Jesus is with us when life is full of stress and strain. Jesus is with us when everything is happy and life is full of excitement and our hearts are burning in us, full of faith, ready to do His will. Jesus is with us when life is full of dismay, when our hopes are dashed, we are disappointed and these are the hardest days of our lives. That's Easter for you: Jesus is alive and promises to be with us always and everywhere, listening to us as we pour out our hearts to Him in our praying, our frustrations, our weaknesses. But more than that: Easter for us is about Jesus being strong and able to change things, to change us, to replace our dismay with hope, to transform our weaknesses with strength and power. Easter is good news: Jesus is alive; Jesus crucified shares our sorrows and suffering; Jesus raised is able to transform us with hope and grace. He makes us new people; He brings the whole blessing and power of God to us and to our world. That's worth believing; its also worth sharing with others. Two people walking home had their eyes opened to Jesus on Easter Sunday evening; what will open our eyes to see Jesus, crucified, raised, Saviour, Lord?