

Proclaiming the Risen Lord

Luke 24 – Acts 2



**6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS**

Proclaiming the Risen Lord

Luke 24 – Acts 2

by Peter Bolt



matthiasmedia

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How to make the most of these studies

1. What is an interactive Bible Study?

These ‘interactive’ Bible studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. The studies will take you through a key theme of Luke and Acts, that is, the proclamation of the gospel, pointing out things along the way, filling in background details, and suggesting avenues for further exploration. But there is also time for you to do some sight-seeing of your own—to wander off, have a good look for yourself, and form your own conclusions.

In other words, we have designed these studies to fall half-way between a sermon and a set of unadorned Bible study questions. We want to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, leaving you to do a lot of the exploration and study yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of ‘interaction’—interaction with the Bible, with the things we’ve written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

Each study contains sections of text to introduce, summarize, suggest and provoke. We’ve left plenty of room in the margins for you to jot comments and questions as you read.

Interspersed throughout the text are two types of ‘interaction’, each with its own symbol:



Investigate

Questions to help you investigate key parts of the Bible.



Think it through

Questions to help you think through the implications of your discoveries and write down your thoughts and reactions.

When you come to one of these symbols, you'll know that it's time to do some work of your own.

3. Suggestions for individual study

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it. You may be spurred to pray again at the end of the study.
- Work through the study, following the directions as you go. Write in the spaces provided.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the *Think it through* sections. It is important to think about the sections of text (rather than just accepting them as true) and to ponder the implications for your life. Writing these things down is a very valuable way to get your thoughts working.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you've learnt.

4. Suggestions for group study

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and threesomes. Get together with a friend/s and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don't need the formal structure of a 'group' to gain maximum benefit.
- It is *vital* that group members work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!), but only if all the members have done the work and are familiar with the material.
- Spend most of the group time discussing the 'interactive' sections—*Investigate* and *Think it through*. Reading all the text together will take too long and should be unnecessary if the group members have done their preparation. You may wish to underline and read aloud particular paragraphs or sections of text that you think are important.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining important sections of text to emphasize, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the theme of proclamation of the gospel in Luke and Acts, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

1

The Proclaimer and his proclamation

Since the beginning, Christians have been proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ. Well, ‘proclaiming’ might sound a little formal. For sure, there are plenty of formal occasions when such proclamation occurs. But Christianity has always been a grass roots movement. The proclamation of the good news has happened in many settings, both formal and informal, with Christian people chatting the news about Jesus wherever they happen to be and to whomever they happen to be speaking. Christian proclamation runs across the face of the earth (cf. 2 Thess 3:1) as it follows the lines of our relationships and contacts with other people.

But in the end, who is doing the proclamation? It is a wonderful thing to realize that although we are the ones speaking about Jesus, it is actually *Jesus* who is speaking through us. *He* is the ultimate proclaimer of this message. We are simply his mouthpieces.

Investigate

Read Luke 24:13-27.

1. What startling events had taken place in Jerusalem?



2. Why were the disciples disappointed (v. 21)? (Cf. Luke 1:67-79)

3. Why did the two disciples fail to understand what had taken place?

4. What two things did the Scriptures predict about the Christ? How do these two things relate to the events in Jerusalem?

Jesus is risen!

Luke has already told the story of Jesus' death (Luke 23), and now he tells the story of Jesus' resurrection from the dead (Luke 24). These are the events that launch the time of proclamation. The resurrection of Jesus is especially important in this regard.

For centuries, Christians have confessed a most remarkable event as the central part of their belief: a man has risen from the dead! Towards the end of the book of Acts, when Paul was on trial before a series of authorities, he was given the opportunity to summarize the Christian message. When he did so, he said that he was on trial for the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6-8; 24:20-21). It was part of mainstream Jewish hope that one day, at the end of time, God would raise the dead from their graves (Dan 12:1-2). Paul and the other early Christians proclaimed that this last-day resurrection had already begun in the present time with one man: Jesus Christ had risen from the dead (see Acts 4:2 and 26:6-8). Jesus Christ was "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23).

But what do we mean when we say, 'Jesus rose from the dead'?

normally rise from the dead—this phenomenon is unknown to ordinary human experience. But the Christian message recognizes this and proclaims that this was not an ordinary event, because Jesus was not an ordinary man. He was the Christ, and the Scriptures had predicted that the Christ would suffer and then enter into his glory (Luke 24:26).

There have been sceptics, since the early days, who have had a great deal of difficulty with the resurrection of Jesus. Some have been happier to talk about some kind of spiritual resurrection, in which the body of Jesus did not leave the tomb. But this is not the view put forward by Luke. He stresses the fact that the body was not found in the tomb. He provides details that show the disciples discovering that the body of the risen Christ was the flesh and bones of the once crucified and buried Jesus. The empty tomb and the appearances meld together to point towards one conclusion: Jesus Christ has risen from the dead!

This too is consistent with him being ‘the Christ’. This is the message proclaimed by Peter and Paul in their first-recorded sermons in Acts. When Peter stands before the assembled crowd in Jerusalem at Pentecost, he reminds them of the prophecy of Psalm 16, that God would not allow his ‘Holy One’ to see decay. Now this clearly could not apply to David, Peter says, because great though David was, he died and was buried and “his tomb is with us to this day” (Acts 2:29). Not so with Jesus:

“... he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.’

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:31-36)

The risen Christ becomes the Proclaimer

The fact that a man rose from the dead is certainly worth speaking about in its own right. But there is another reason why the resurrection of Jesus resulted in the great time of proclamation being launched on the world. The risen Christ himself is the one doing the proclamation!



Investigate

Read the following verses. Who is the one taking all the initiative?

Luke 24:49; Acts 2:32-33

Acts 3:26

Acts 26:23

The Proclaimer behind our proclamation

The good news of Jesus Christ is certainly worth the telling. From the beginning, Christians have overflowed with that news. As they have believed the gospel, they have proclaimed, spoken and conversed the gospel to others (cf. 2 Cor 4:13).

But behind all this human speaking there is a far more powerful force at work. Jesus himself—the long-awaited Christ, now risen from the dead—is the one who proclaims this good news. As the first to rise from the dead, he now proclaims “light [to his own] people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).

Now, that is *some* backing!

