

Women as Witnesses to the Resurrection in Luke's Gospel: A Contemporary Woman's Reading.

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27th September 2017

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SUMMARY

All the Gospel accounts portray women as being the first to witness evidence of the resurrection. Without the resurrection Jesus could be seen as just another man who died for his cause. The resurrection is the climax of the Gospel accounts and the women were the first to the scene. In the Lukan account, the women are also the first to understand the significance of the resurrection. They remembered what Jesus had taught them while they travelled with him and the group around him. Having been with Jesus and having learnt from him, the women can be thought of as disciples.

According to Luke, they also told of what they had witnessed and understood without being commissioned. The society of the day was patriarchal and Luke the evangelist was part of that society. In that context, the fact that the women's role at the empty tomb was preserved in the written narrative is significant. This dissertation examines Luke 8:1-3 and Luke 10: 38-42 to give insight into Luke's attitude to women, and then the Lukan resurrection accounts. Luke's portrayal of women — neither totally liberating for women nor totally oppressive — can be seen to give mixed messages for women. However, the account of the resurrection does give women a prominent role and women today can take heart, be inspired, encouraged and emboldened by this account.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed.....

Date: 27th September 2017.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rev. Dr Vicky Balabanski and Dr Tanya Wittwer for their wisdom, guidance, patience and support during the writing of this thesis.

1. INTRODUCTION

All the Gospel accounts preserved in the New Testament have some of the women who followed Jesus as the first witnesses to evidence of the momentous event of the resurrection. In Luke's Gospel¹, the women were the first to discover the empty tomb and they also told of what they had seen. In effect, the women were the first evangelists. The fact that all the Gospel accounts relay that women were the first to witness the empty tomb and were not written out gives an indication of the importance of the women being at the tomb. The culture of the day was patriarchal² which could have led to the women being edited out of the account of the first evidence of the resurrection³. In the Jewish culture women's testimony was not thought to be reliable⁴ yet even so, the women are portrayed as the first to witness the empty tomb.

In this paper, I propose to look at the resurrection account in the Third Gospel or Luke's Gospel. The purpose is to reflect on the importance of the women being the first witnesses and what, if any, the significance or meaning is for women today. I will look at the resurrection account as it is and in its context in Luke's Gospel. In order to gain deeper insight into the attitude to women expressed by the Lukan author I will look at some of the other accounts regarding women within the Gospel. I have chosen to examine the pericopes of Luke 8:1-3 and 10:38-42 to gain an understanding of Luke's

¹ All scripture references are from the NRSV translation unless stated otherwise.

² The date and provenance of Luke's Gospel are contested. Internal evidence indicates that the evangelist was writing for a Greco-Roman audience in an urban context of the Roman Empire, probably in the last two decades of the first century. The patriarchal culture referred to is therefore at some distance culturally and chronologically from the patriarchal culture of Jesus' own day.

³ F. Scott Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Luke's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 101-3; Chris Maunder, "Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary in the New Testament," in *Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, edited by Chris Maunder (London: Burns and Oates, 2008), 24.

⁴ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 607.

attitude to women. Luke 8:1-3 names some of the same women who are recorded in the resurrection account; Luke 10:38-42 raises important questions about how women are portrayed in the Gospel and is therefore significant in shaping our understanding of the resurrection account in relation to the women portrayed.

In order to understand these sections of the Gospel I plan to use a synchronic reading⁵ of the text drawing insights from various critical methods including social scientific, feminist, narrative and reimagining⁶. An understanding of the social system of the audience is necessary to answer these questions and so gain an understanding of what the text may have meant to the audience⁷. The understanding gained will help the reader to interpret the passage and apply any insights to relevant situations faced today.

The resurrection of Jesus is arguably the pivotal and most important event in the Gospel narrative. It is critically important to Christianity. Without the resurrection Jesus can be viewed as just another good man who died for his cause. "Christ's death on the cross for sins (see 1 Cor 15:3) has no saving significance without the resurrection. It is

⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, revised and expanded edition (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 13.

⁶ Dietmar Neufeld. Social Sciences and the New Testament <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0117.xml#mainContent> accessed 6/8/2017. See also: Bruce J. Malina, "Rhetorical Criticism and Social-Scientific Criticism: Why Won't Romanticism Leave Us Alone?" in *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*, edited by Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 6, Gorman, *Elements*, 121, Brigitte Kahl, Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading With The Eyes Of The Vanquished (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 27.

⁷ Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 2003), 6; David G Horrell, "Social-Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect" in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, David G. Horrell ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 3.

merely the Roman crucifixion of a false messiah”⁸. The resurrection empowers the whole of the Gospel. The lives of those who saw Jesus after the resurrection were changed. The hopelessness they experienced after the crucifixion was turned into joy as a result of encountering the risen Jesus.

The author of the Third Gospel is anonymous; nowhere within the Gospel is the author named⁹. Any information we have about the author is gleaned from “hints within the narrative”¹⁰ and some references from the early church patriarchs¹¹. However, a certain ‘Luke’ is mentioned in other books in the New Testament (Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 1:24), and some scholars argue that the “we” passages in Acts (Acts 16: 10-17, 20:5-21: 18, 27:1-28:16) are Luke referring to himself as Paul’s companion¹². It is likely that the author was well educated, as he was able to skilfully blend his sources¹³. The introduction, Luke 1: 1-4, gives a number of insights into the author. He was not an apostle, he had not been a part of Jesus’ disciples and would not have known Jesus in person. He is reliant on the accounts of eyewitnesses (1:2), that is, he is “indebted to the testimony of others rather than personal experience”¹⁴. The Luke of Col. 4:16 is named ‘the beloved physician’, and this could suggest a link between Luke the evangelist and the Luke named in Colossians. It is not impossible that Luke the evangelist was a physician, as “details in the description of illnesses and healings in the Third Gospel, and the unsentimental sensitivity with which Jesus

⁸ Michael J. Gorman, “St Paul and the Resurrection: The Resurrection is the Foundation of all we are,” *The Priest* (April 2009): 10.

⁹ Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, “Gospel of Luke,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, third edition revised and updated, edited by Carol A Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 497. See also Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 21.

¹⁰ Green, *The Gospel*, 21.

¹¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 497.

¹⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 5.

attends the sick, are what we would expect from a medical professional”¹⁵. However, this claim of Luke’s medical background is disputed¹⁶ as the medical terminology used by Luke is found to be used by others who were not physicians but were educated Greeks¹⁷.

The author is also probably a male, as he was well educated, but it is not impossible that the author could be a woman, as wealthy women or upper-class women often were educated. However, this is not likely due to the attitude to women found in the Gospel and the narrator in Luke 1:3, in the Greek, speaks as a man¹⁸. It is generally accepted that Luke was a Gentile¹⁹, although some of the early church fathers suggest that he may have been Jewish²⁰. If, as some suggest, Luke had spent time with Paul²¹, and was educated, he may have had a good knowledge and understanding of Judaic practices and theology without being a Jew²².

Luke in his introduction says that others had written an orderly account and after “investigating everything” (1:4) he decided to write his own orderly account. There is the implication that some of these earlier accounts did not meet the standard Luke expected and therefore he is writing his own account. His orderly account does not mean that it is in strict chronological order but the order is one that brings unity to the narrative and the message he is trying to convey. The message conveyed is that the purposes of God have been achieved²³. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection have

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 497.

¹⁷ Joseph, A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 52.

¹⁸ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 497.

¹⁹ Ibid., 497.

²⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 9, see also Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* Volume 1 (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic 2012), 404.

²¹ Keener, *Acts*, 404-5. If the “we” passages in Acts are referring to Luke and Paul.

²² Edwards, *The Gospel*, 10, see also Keener, *Acts*, 404-5.

²³ Green, *The Gospel*, 21.

fulfilled prophecy and the promised salvation is realised²⁴. The author is claiming to be an historian by carefully researching and interviewing those who were involved from the beginning, eyewitnesses to the events portrayed, and most likely he had access to the Gospel of Mark²⁵.

The purpose of the Gospel as stated in 1:4 is that Theophilus “may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed”. This means that Theophilus can be assured that what he has been taught is grounded in Jesus’ teaching²⁶. It was most likely that Luke’s Gospel would be shared around the Christian community, and it would also have provided encouragement for the community as it faced opposition²⁷. It is possible that Theophilus is a historical person, but it could also have been a pseudonym to protect a prominent person. Theophilus means “friend of God” and addressing him as “most excellent Theophilus” suggests that he was a person of high status and possibly was wealthy²⁸.

Two possibly polar opposite views of the portrayal of women in Luke come to light on reading the literature about the Lukan Gospel and how women are portrayed in the Gospel. One view shows women in Luke in a positive light, whereas the other view says that women are portrayed in Luke in a negative light, especially in regard to leadership²⁹. Amy-Jill Levine summarizes both views. The positive is as follows: “The gospel of Luke celebrates women’s discipleship, self-determination, and leadership

²⁴ I. Howard Marshall *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 35.

²⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 11.

²⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 9.

²⁷ Green, *The Gospel*, 21.

²⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 27.

²⁹ Robert Karris, “Women and Discipleship in Luke,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1) (January, 1994), 1. See also John T. Carroll, “The Gospel of Luke: A Contemporary Cartography,” *Interpretation* 68 (October 2014): 371

even as it heralds a reversal of systemic inequities”³⁰. And the negative presents the opposite view: “The Gospel of Luke threatens any attempt made by women, the poor, or the disenfranchised to find a voice in either society or church....Luke’s gospel is a menacing text that retains and reinforces kyriarchal structures”³¹. At first it seems extraordinary that the same Gospel account can have such profoundly different responses³².

The bias that a person brings to their reading of the text, born out of their background and experience, the method of analysis and how complete their analysis of the text is will affect the conclusions made by the reader³³. For example, I am a well-educated woman who has grown up and is living in the first world in the 21st century. Therefore, I may expect, even subconsciously, that women should be treated as equals to men and be unimpressed if they are not. If I am unaware of this bias, then I could easily draw the conclusion that the Lukan account is against women. If I am aware of the bias then I can be careful when reading and analysing a text to inform myself of the social context of the text. Having done that I may be able to discern what the author was trying to convey without reacting to what I may perceive as an attempt to disenfranchise women.

One of the reasons that Luke was/is thought to have a positive view of women is that Luke’s Gospel contains a large amount of material about women not found in the other Synoptic Gospels³⁴. See the table below.

³⁰ Amy-Jill Levine, “Introduction,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³² Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 249.

³³ *Ibid.*, 249; Levine, *A Feminist*, 2.

³⁴ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 493, see also Barbara E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part?: Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 2.

Stories of women in Luke:³⁵

Luke only	Also in Matthew and Mark
Elizabeth, (1:5-7, 24-25, 39-45, 57-66)	Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39)
Mary (1:26-56; 2:1-52)	Jairus' daughter and woman with haemorrhage (8:40-60)
Anna (2:36-38)	Woman baking bread (13:20-21)
Widow of Nain (7:11-17)	Widow's Offering (21:1-4)
Woman who showed great love (7:36-50)	Galilean women at cross and burial (23:49, 55-56)
Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, other women (8:1-3)	Galilean women discover empty tomb (24:1-12)
Mary and Martha (10:38-42)	
Woman bent double (13:10-17)	
Woman searching for lost coin (15:8-10)	
Widow demanding justice (18:1-8)	

³⁵ Reid: *Choosing*, 2.

Jerusalem women on the way to the cross (23:26-32)	
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The stories about women are often paired with stories about men. The pairing is of two types, first, two stories with a similar point or function and second, similar stories in different contexts to illustrate God's plan³⁶.

Pair subject	Characters	Luke Reference
Annunciation	Zechariah	1: 5-23
	Mary	1:26-38
Songs	Mary	1:46-56
	Zechariah	1:67-79
Prophets	Simeon	2:25-35
	Anna	2:36-38
Miracle	Widow at Zarephath	4:25-26
	Leper, Naaman the Syrian	4:27
Miracle	Man with spirit of an unclean demon	4:33-37
		4:38-49
	Peter's mother-in-law	
Named disciples	Male apostles	6:12-16
	Women ministers	8:1-3

³⁶ Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women in Luke Acts: A Redactional View," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (3 1990): 443-445.

Rescue from death (healing)	Centurion's servant	7:1-10
	Widow's son at Nain	7: 11-17
Penitent	Paralytic man	5:17-26
	Sinful woman	7:35-50
Miracles	Gerasene demoniac	8:26-39
	Jairus' daughter and haemorrhaging woman	8:40-56
Discipleship	Scribe	10:25-37
	Martha	10:38-42
Gentile accusers of Israel	Ninevites	11:29-30,32
	Queen of the south	11:31
Releases	Bent over/crippled woman	13:10-17
	Man with dropsy	14:1-6
Hider parables	Man(?) Planting mustard seed	13:18-19
	Woman and leaven	13:20-21
Finder parables	Man seeking lost sheep	15:1-7
	Woman seeking lost coin	15:8-10
Taken	Men(?) Sleeping	17:33-34
	Women grinding	17:35
Prayer	Widow and unjust judge	18:1-8
	Pharisee and tax collector	18:9-14
Attitude to Worship	Scribes	20:45-47

	Widow	21:1-4
Followers	Simon of Cyrene	23:26-27a
	Number of people/women	23:27b
Watchers	All his acquaintances	23:49a
	Women	23:49b
Resurrection witnesses	Women	24:1-10
	Peter	24:11-12

The number of stories about women has led some to think that Luke was supportive of women, placing women in a prominent position, giving them enhanced social status and equality³⁷. However, the roles depicted for the women in the stories are limited and generally reflect conventional roles³⁸.

Although the Gospel includes women among the followers of Jesus and being healed by Jesus, on examination of the text there are parts in which women are silenced, subordinated, restricted and controlled³⁹. However, there are other parts of the text which can bring “insights valuable for the building of an egalitarian society and of a theology that preserves and respects women’s experience. But learning to untangle and free them from the harmful elements of the tradition is a difficult task”⁴⁰. The challenge of the text can lead to questions about the place of women in society being

³⁷ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 493; Reid, *Choosing*, 2-3; Seim, *The Double Message*, 3; Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 2.

³⁸ D’Angelo, *Women*, 448.

³⁹ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 493; Reid, *Choosing*, 3; Seim, *The Double Message*, 1; Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 2-3; Levine, *Introduction*, 1.

⁴⁰ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 493.

raised in the mind of the reader. Consequently, readers may have cause to rethink their response to the issues in the text.

Using the insights into the author's attitude to women gained by examining the pericopes of Luke 8:1-3 and 10:38-42, and applying these insights to the resurrection account, we will be able to determine if the portrayal of women at the resurrection is positive for women. If it is positive for women, then women reading the text today may be given courage and boldness as they endeavour to live out their lives in a Christian context in the 21st century. Not only may women feel emboldened but also energised and excited as the realisation that the message that changed the world was encountered by women first. The women were attending the tomb as part of their ordinary lives and were given extraordinary insight as a result of their faithfulness. Men may not have understood at the time, but the women did and they spread the news. Today women may understand issues of critical import before men come to an understanding and they can take the resurrection account as encouragement to step out and speak up.

2. LUKE 8:1-3

The pericope Luke 8:1-3 introduces three women by name and others who are travelling with Jesus. The section is a summary, indicating who was travelling with Jesus; the twelve and women, and what was being done, that is, preaching the kingdom of God. It is also a bridge between the previous section where Jesus' teaching and compassionate ministry is outlined and the following section which describes Jesus' teaching and further healing and mighty works⁴¹.

David Garland quoting M. A. Co in a footnote states that a summary is “a relatively independent and concise narrative statement that describes a prolonged situation or portrays an event as happening repeatedly within an indefinite period of time”⁴². This section is a summary of Jesus' actions – bringing the good news of the kingdom of God and it speaks of those who were travelling with him. It also highlights some of the people with Jesus and their contribution to the ministry. The twelve and women were with Jesus as he taught and performed mighty acts as they travelled throughout Galilee. The good news would have been proclaimed repeatedly by Jesus in this time in Galilee. At each new town or contact with a new group of people the good news would have been shared. The women were part of this travelling group, they were with Jesus just as the twelve were with him. Luke singles out for mention Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna. These women then, are explicitly named as experiencing Jesus' preaching and teaching as he ministered in Galilee. Many further women, though not named, are also explicitly present. The women witnessing Jesus' ministry are important later in the Gospel account (at the resurrection) and Luke is establishing their

⁴¹ Marshall, *The Gospel*, 314-5.

⁴² David E. Garland, *Luke: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Michigan: Zondervan, 2011)*, 341.

credentials to be witnesses. The definition of a summary quoted above when applied to this pericope means that the relationship and experiences of the women witnessing Jesus' ministry was ongoing throughout the time of the Galilean ministry. The narrative implies that it is likely that there were also times of private teaching and sharing when the group was on its own. This may have been whilst they were moving from one place to the next or at the end of the day. There would be plenty of time as they walked from one town to the next for Jesus to expound on what they had heard and seen. It would also have been a time when questions could be asked and further explanations sought.

The people travelling with Jesus are divided into two groups – the twelve and some women. Although not designated as disciples at this point, the women are travelling with Jesus in the same way as disciples have been described as doing (e.g. Luke 6:17). Discipleship, at this point in Luke's narrative, was to be with Jesus and observing his ministry⁴³. Edwards states that the "construction in Greek, meaning "both the Twelve who were with him and certain women who had been healed," combines the Twelve and the women in Jesus' mission"⁴⁴. The women are portrayed as being on the same level as the men according to Marshall: "Along with the Twelve are mentioned the women; they appear on the same level as the men (Grundmann, 174). The syntax is loose, but the meaning is clear"⁴⁵. If the construction in the Greek has both the Twelve and the women involved in Jesus' mission then the women can be thought to be equal to the men. Bauckham agrees that the structure of the sentence "places the twelve and the women alongside each other in the same relationship to Jesus"⁴⁶. The key point is that what is said about the twelve is being said equally of the

⁴³ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 112.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 232.

⁴⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel*, 316.

⁴⁶ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 111.

women⁴⁷.

It is stated by Green that travelling with Jesus or being with him implies that those travelling with him are disciples, both the men and the women companions:

“As a summary, this text also introduces more blatantly what has only begun to be apparent in the narrative – namely, the ongoing presence of traveling companions “with” Jesus. Being “with Jesus” connotes “discipleship” – an implication immediately borne out by the identification of Jesus’ companions as “the twelve” and as women who ... embody the meaning of discipleship for Luke”⁴⁸.

However, Schaberg notes that women are “never explicitly called “disciples””⁴⁹. This may be so but the implication is that the women were on the same level as the men.

The passage does not indicate that the male members of the group were doing anything except being with Jesus; they are not depicted as preaching or serving in any way at all. This may not be at all surprising as the definition of a disciple noted above was to be with Jesus and learn from him. The women as well as being with Jesus and learning from him were also providing resources for the ministry team. What this may mean will be discussed in more detail below. Spencer suggests that Jesus was not willing to trust anyone with his message until closer to his leaving the earth⁵⁰. At this point in the narrative Jesus is the one who speaks with authority and with charisma

⁴⁷ Ibid.,112.

⁴⁸ Green, *The Gospel*, 317.

⁴⁹ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 506.

⁵⁰ Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 119.

which drew the crowds to him and his message⁵¹.

Disciples, in Luke, are seen as those who leave everything behind to follow Jesus. In Luke 14:26, this includes leaving wives and other family members. Luke does not state that husbands are to be left behind. Some of the women following Jesus may have been single or widowed, whereas others would have had to leave husbands behind to travel with Jesus. Luke may be being circumspect and trying not to cause controversy by suggesting that women could leave their husbands and children behind and follow Jesus. Although, it does appear that women may have done that as Joanna the wife of Chuza is not with her husband as she travels with Jesus and the other disciples. We are not aware of what exactly Jesus instructed women on this issue as it is not stated. Luke has women travelling with Jesus and we can assume that they left behind much to do so, but there is no instruction in the text addressing women on this issue.

Travelling with Jesus enables both the Twelve and the women to learn by listening to Jesus as he preaches and teaches and by observing his healing and miracle ministry⁵². Women were known to support rabbis, but Witherington suggests that it would have been seen as highly improper for women to travel with a rabbi⁵³. Nevertheless, it does appear that Jesus intended women to travel with him, learn and witness his ministry as preparation for their role at the resurrection⁵⁴. It seems contradictory that Jesus would intend for women to travel with him and so cause a scandal and then rely on their witness to spread the message of the resurrection.

⁵¹ Ibid., 119.

⁵² Kimberly, Penner. "The Work of Wealthy Women: Female Discipleship in Luke 8:1-3." (Master of Theological Studies diss., University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College, Ontario, 2011),.62.

⁵³ Ben Witherington III. "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and other Disciples – Luke 8.1-3," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 135.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 135.

Surely their testimony would be damaged if society thought they had been involved in scandalous conduct. Schaberg questions the impropriety of women travelling with Jesus⁵⁵. If the fact that women were travelling with Jesus was scandalous, there should be some mention of it or defence of it in the traditions⁵⁶. She also suggests that the women may have made day trips from home, as the geographical area is rather small, rather than leaving their homes and joining the group full time⁵⁷. Would it be possible, at that time even with the area being small, for women to do day trips? The only mode of transport for most people was walking. To walk to where Jesus was ministering and then walk back again, in daylight, would most likely only leave a short time with Jesus. They would also need to be certain of exactly where Jesus was heading to be able to meet up with him and have time with him. Any change of plan on Jesus' part would have made it difficult for the women to meet up with Jesus. This may be possible in the 21st century with modern transport and communication, but was unlikely in Jesus' time. If the women travelling with the group were in a sufficient number, then they would in effect be providing a measure of safety, security and propriety which would not be so if there were only a few women. It is possible that the "many others" (8:3) included a sufficient number of women to provide the propriety desired by society. There is also no indication in the text that the women did day trips. The text says that "the twelve were with him, as well as some women" (8:1) which indicates that the women were travelling with the group and not joining them at points along the way.

"Luke shows that the women followed Jesus from the beginning of his ministry until the

⁵⁵ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 506.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 506.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

end”⁵⁸. That is, they were “with him” (8:2) from Galilee to the crucifixion, where “all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things” (23:49). Any possible impropriety is not the main issue here and as Schaberg stated, there is no evidence that it was improper⁵⁹. The important point is that the women were with Jesus and learning from him and witnessing his ministry. Later in the narrative when Luke portrays the resurrection account, the women having been with, witnessed and learnt from Jesus, can remember his teaching relating to these events.

Some of the women travelling with Jesus were also supporting the ministry from their resources (8:3). Itinerant ministers or rabbis commonly received support from women, but it was not so common for women to travel with the ministry team⁶⁰. It is unlikely that the presence of women travelling with Jesus would be invented by Luke and this gives an indication of the inclusiveness of Jesus’ ministry and fellowship⁶¹. It may also be an indication of the reach of Jesus’ ministry that “the many others” could have comprised married and single women, including widows and former prostitutes⁶². That the women “provided for them out of their resources” (8:3) may suggest that the women were single, as it would have been easier for them to distribute their own resources⁶³. It is unlikely in Palestinian society that women would have left their husbands to travel with an itinerant rabbi and usually would not have had access to their husband’s money (see below for further discussion on this point). The women not only have heard the

⁵⁸ Esther A. de Boer, “The Lukan Mary Magdalene and the Other Women Following Jesus,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 141.

⁵⁹ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 506.

⁶⁰ Bock, Darrell I. *Luke* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 1994), 713. See also Edwards, *The Gospel*, 233

⁶¹ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 233.

⁶² Green, *The Gospel*, 318.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 319. See also David C. Sim, “The Women Followers of Jesus: The Implications of Luke 8:1-3,” *Heythrop Journal*, 30 no 1 (Jan 1989): 54.

word but are acting on it by supporting the ministry⁶⁴. This then indicates that the women had already had a ministry role – they are actively participating in Jesus’ mission⁶⁵.

All the Gospels mention women at the crucifixion and resurrection, but 8:1-3 is unique in mentioning women before the crucifixion and resurrection⁶⁶. It “is the only prepassion reference to a sorority of women as Jesus’ disciples”⁶⁷. Luke is setting the stage for the passion narratives by mentioning the women at this point in the Gospel. Significantly these women witnessed all “four essential components of the early church’s confession of 1 Cor 15: 3-5: the death, burial, empty tomb and resurrection of Jesus”⁶⁸. The women are qualified to be witnesses at the resurrection as they had accompanied Jesus from Galilee, learnt from him, and were at his crucifixion and burial⁶⁹.

Joseph Fitzmyer sets out these interconnected points in this way:

“The women are depicted by Luke as ministering to Jesus and the Twelve in roles surprising for their day: providing for them, and from their own means; at least one of them was a married woman (Joanna); how many among the “many others” were so too? In introducing these women followers here, Luke is foreshadowing their role at Jesus’ cross (23:49) and at the empty tomb (24:10); but he will also depict them deliberately in association with the Twelve, with Mary, and his brothers (Acts 1:14). They are “the women” who with the other first believers prayerfully await the promised Spirit “with one accord”⁷⁰.

⁶⁴ Green, *The Gospel*, 320.

⁶⁵ Penner, *The Work*, 63.

⁶⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 232.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Marshall, *The Gospel*, 315.

⁷⁰ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 696.

The role of the women is described in Luke 8:3 as 'providing', or more literally, serving (*diakoneo*). This verb διακονέω can mean to wait on tables or to serve but is best translated as 'provide for' in the context of 8:3⁷¹. The context of the passage is the summary of a journey in which Jesus, the twelve and the women were travelling from village to village or town. In this context it is more likely that the women were providing for the group, in a more general sense, rather than just waiting on tables. The women supported the group in response to what Jesus has done for them⁷². Garland states that in the context the verb meant "to provide for" and "the imperfect tense conveys habitual action"⁷³. This would mean that the women continually provided for the group whilst they travelled throughout Galilee. Sim argues that "διακονέω clearly has the sense 'provide for'...rather than its usual meaning of 'serve'"⁷⁴. "To translate it as 'serve' only confuses the issue and implicitly imposes a condition of servitude on the discipleship of the women in Luke 8.1-3 which is not suggested in the text"⁷⁵. Providing for them out of their resources does not obviously imply servitude, but rather someone helping them or meeting a need. The group may have been made up of women of differing status in the community and the role undertaken by each woman would also have varied.

The resources provided could mean the material needs of the group, as they were itinerant and therefore would not have been able to provide for themselves through employment. The service provided possibly ranged from providing finances to more domestic duties such as providing meals. It is unlikely that all the women would have been wealthy enough to provide financially for the group and it is likely that any

⁷¹ Sim, *The Women Followers*, 57

⁷² Bock, *Luke*, 714.

⁷³ Garland, *Luke*, 341.

⁷⁴ Sim, *The Women Followers*, 52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

resources would have been pooled to meet the needs of the group⁷⁶. Sim discusses the question of what is meant by the women providing for the group if they were not wealthy. He agrees with Witherington that some women would have only been able to give of their time and talents, but disagrees that domestic duties were part of it⁷⁷. Sim concludes: “what evidence is there that any of Jesus’ women followers were responsible for the domestic chores? The short answer is that there is no evidence”⁷⁸. The support of the women is an important service to Jesus and the group. The Twelve had left their work on being called by Jesus and Jesus, as an itinerant rabbi, would not have been able to hold down an occupation and probably did not receive support from his community in Nazareth⁷⁹. Sim reminds us that the male disciples were responsible for the supply of food in other texts such as the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42)⁸⁰. Sim also refers to Mary and Martha in Luke 10: 38-42, where he thinks Jesus’ emphasis is on teaching not on making meals⁸¹.

The support the women provided enabled Jesus to pursue his mission. It quite likely entailed many facets, depending on the woman involved. Some would have been able to provide finances, others goods and others service. The women generously supported the ministry in response to what Jesus had done for them, which included (in some cases) delivering them ‘from evil spirits and infirmities’ (Luke 8:2). “The wording of 8:2-3 implies that they are acting out of gratitude for being healed, unlike the Twelve”⁸². This is making reference to the Twelve being called by Jesus to leave everything and follow him (5:11, 27), whereas the women are following out of gratitude.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Sim, *The Women Followers*, 52

⁸⁰ Ibid., 58.

⁸¹ Ibid., 59-60.

⁸² Schaberg, *Gospel*, 506.

Some ancient manuscripts have the singular 'to him', that is, the support is limited to Jesus only (which is reflected for example NKJV and CIB translations), whilst others read the plural, that is, the support is for the whole group (reflected for example in the NRSV and NIV translations). Bock states "the harder reading is the plural"⁸³ and Fitzmyer states that the "better attested reading is *autois*, "them"⁸⁴. Is "them" all of the group, including the women in the group, or just Jesus and the Twelve? If all of the group, including women, were being provided for, then, this would model mutual service which Jesus would have expected the group to be doing⁸⁵. Everyone in the group would need attention and food and it would be reasonable to think that the whole group was being served. Schaberg attests that "the object of their attention is Jesus and the Twelve. The women are cast in a nonreciprocated role of service or support of the males of the movement...the women are subordinate"⁸⁶. However, practically, it would make sense if the support was for the whole group travelling with Jesus and not just for Jesus and the Twelve. Luke has valued the women's contribution enough to mention it here. The women are mentioned along with the Twelve and they were equally exposed to Jesus' ministry. Without the women's contribution, it would have been difficult for Jesus' ministry to proceed⁸⁷.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna are singled out from the many other women by being named. This may have been due to them having significant resources and perhaps a substantial house which could have been used as a base for Jesus and the group. Spencer suggests that if this is so, then the women may have taken an active part in any discussions and strategizing that may have taken place whilst the group

⁸³ Bock, *Luke*, 714.

⁸⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 698.

⁸⁵ Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 120.

⁸⁶ Schaberg, *Gospel*, 506.

⁸⁷ Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 114.

was in their house⁸⁸.

The first woman named is Mary called Magdalene, who had had seven demons go out from her. Mary was one who had been cured of evil spirits. The number of demons may be indicating the degree of the disorder⁸⁹. "The number seven is used to symbolize completeness or perfection. As a result, the fact that Mary Magdalene is healed of seven demons indicates the totality or completeness of her previous possession by evil spirits"⁹⁰. She may have been a social outcast if the possession by the evil spirits had affected her behaviour⁹¹. This is likely as the indication is she had been in a severe state of possession.

Mary's name, Magdalene, may be referring to the region/town of Magdala which was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, north of Tiberias⁹². Magdal means tower in Hebrew⁹³. The closest known town is Migdal Nunia (tower of fish). Usually the woman was named after a male member of the family (father, husband). It is unusual to be named after a place, which may indicate her independence⁹⁴. Taylor concludes that Magdala was Mary's "Galilean nickname: it made sense in her time with Jesus, away from her village on the roads of Galilee"⁹⁵. Being named first can be seen to indicate that Mary was of primary import or the leader of the women in the group around Jesus⁹⁶. Luke mentioning her and naming her is important in establishing her as being

⁸⁸ Ibid., 122-4.

⁸⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 698; Marshall, *The Gospel*, 316; Green, *The Gospel*, 320.

⁹⁰ Penner, *The Work*, 80.

⁹¹ Green, *The Gospel*, 318.

⁹² Bock, *Luke*, 713; Green, *The Gospel*, 320.

⁹³ Marshall, *The Gospel*, 316; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 697; Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others: Women who Followed Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 130.

⁹⁴ Joan Taylor, InOurTime-20160225-MaryMagdalene.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0717j1r>

⁹⁵ Joan Taylor, "Missing Magdala and the Name of Mary 'Magdalene'," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 146 (3, 2014): 223.

⁹⁶ Ricci, *Mary*, 127.

with Jesus for a long period of his ministry. No husband is mentioned for Mary. This may not mean that there was no husband, however it is likely that Mary was single as a result of her being demon possessed and her marriageability would have been severely damaged by her state⁹⁷. If Mary Magdalene was single it may have made it easier for her to travel with the group.

The second woman named is Joanna, the wife of Chuza, who was Herod's steward. Many would have experienced oppression from Herod's rule and as such may have viewed Joanna with suspicion⁹⁸, however Jesus has welcomed her and included her in the group that travels with him. This is an indication of the reach of Jesus' ministry even as far as Herod's court. Chuza was an official in Herod's court⁹⁹, possibly a high ranking official¹⁰⁰. Fitzmyer thinks that he was the manager of Herod's estate¹⁰¹. Luke thought it important to name and describe Joanna's husband. He could just have named her as he did for Susanna. Bauckham suggests five reasons for Luke naming Chuza:

- “(1) The reference indicates that Joanna was wealthy and so a major contributor to the disciples' expenses
- (2) Joanna's high social status confers social legitimacy on Jesus' movement or the Christian movement
- (3) Luke makes a point of referring to people from the ruling elite because “there were members of this community who could identify with these early

137. ⁹⁷ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 119; Penner, *The Work*, 77; Witherington, *On the Road*,

⁹⁸ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 150.

⁹⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 713.

¹⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 134-150.

¹⁰¹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 698

heroes of the faith by virtue of having a similar, or perhaps slightly inferior position in society”

(4) Luke is naming one of the sources of his Gospel traditions, who would especially account for his special material relating to Herod Antipas

(5) the reference is part of Luke’s larger narrative strategy, reminding readers that Herod is still in power, suggesting, through Joanna’s connection with his court, that Herod “knows or will soon know about Jesus”, and so producing “suspense and speculation as to how Herod will react to Jesus”¹⁰².

Bauckham favours the first suggestion and further discusses the sources of a woman’s wealth which she would control. Otherwise she would be beholden to her husband and unlikely to have enough discretionary power to dispense the wealth to help Jesus’ ministry. The sources of wealth could be:

1. Inheritance from her father’s estate
2. Deed of Gift
3. Ketubba – “a sum owed by the bridegroom to his wife”
4. Dowry
5. Widow’s maintenance from her husband’s estate
6. Widow’s inheritance
7. Money earned¹⁰³

There is some speculation as to Joanna’s marital status¹⁰⁴. Has she left her husband to

¹⁰² Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 119-120.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 121-135.

¹⁰⁴ Ricci, *Mary*, 154.

follow Jesus, which would have been condemned by society? Has she been widowed and left with enough wealth to follow Jesus and support his ministry? Did Chuza agree with her and support her interacting with Jesus and following him? There is no indication in the text which would allow us to answer these questions definitively. It seems likely, to me, that Joanna had Chuza's support for him to be mentioned.

Although there is no indication in the text that Joanna left her husband, Moltmann-Wendell argues that Joanna did leave her husband. The accepted way of living in Herod's court was a lifestyle of "lust, caprice, wealth and whim, indifference and open curiosity"¹⁰⁵. Joanna had an encounter with Jesus and was healed. She would also have encountered those who travelled with Jesus and gained insight into a different lifestyle. Consequently, she may also have found a purpose in life which led to her leaving Chuza to start a new life¹⁰⁶. Moltmann-Wendell also claims that Joanna was "no pitiful ascetic, who left everything behind her. She brought wealth of her own, and in the Jesus group remained who she was, a respectable woman of wealth and capital"¹⁰⁷. This may be plausible, but the text does not give us any indication that this was the case.

Identifying with Jesus may have come at some risk to both Joanna and Chuza, as they were part of Herod's court. However, at this stage in Jesus' ministry, Herod appears to be more curious than antagonistic, with Luke 9:9 having Herod trying to see Jesus¹⁰⁸. Spencer agrees with Moltmann-Wendell that Joanna would have been attracted to Jesus' healing ministry, but it is only a possibility that she would have left her

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendell, *The Women Around Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 136.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 127.

husband¹⁰⁹. He also asserts that Luke may have been downplaying “how far respectable ladies like Joanna were willing to go to follow Jesus”¹¹⁰, as he did not want to give the impression that the Jesus movement was antifamily and socially disruptive¹¹¹. The Jesus movement may not have been antifamily but it was socially disruptive. Jesus’ teachings challenged some accepted practices. Nevertheless, there is no evidence in the text that leaving the marriage was encouraged.

Susanna is named here, but that is all we know about her. She is part of the group of women who were healed by Jesus, travelled with him and provided for him. It is the only time that she is named in the Gospel of Luke, or in the New Testament. It is likely that she was known in the community and her importance is acknowledged through Luke mentioning her by name.

The writer of the Gospel in the introduction states “I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3). After researching, Luke wrote an account with the events in an order which portrayed the message the writer was endeavouring to deliver. This implies that the events depicted are there deliberately and not accidentally, and that each event is told for the purpose of revealing the truth of the events. The portrayal of the women and their role in this section is therefore there for a purpose. This section could have been left out but it was kept. The women and their contribution to the ministry were important enough to be mentioned at this point. They are portrayed as supporting the ministry and travelling with the group around Jesus. The Lukan context means that the passage would have been coloured by the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Spencer, *Salty Wives*, 128.

patriarchal culture of the day; nevertheless, the women are mentioned and their contribution to the ministry highlighted. The audience would have taken note of the people mentioned and recalled them when the resurrection account was heard.

3. LUKE 10: 38-42

The pericope in Luke 10: 38-42 has provoked many interpretations and responses, from positive to negative. “This text which is found only in Luke, should come with a warning: Proceed with caution! There is nothing neutral about these verses nor are they likely to evoke a neutral response from the hearer”¹¹². Some of the reactions have been provoked by the interpretation and preaching that people (especially women) have heard over the millennia since the story was first told. The cultural assumptions that Western readers bring, often around the status and power of women and men, colours the interpretation of the passage¹¹³. Also, the prejudices of the individual interpreting the passage will have an affect on how the passage is perceived¹¹⁴. The meaning of the original Greek words, what was acceptable in the culture of the day and which version of the story is the most original version have all had an impact on how the story has been told and how it has been interpreted. A look at the text and the interpretative issues will be undertaken in the next section in order to elucidate what Luke was trying to convey and also to see if any light can be shed on Luke’s attitude to women and ministry.

Is the text actually about women? Brendan Byrne states:

“While I understand feminist interest in the passage, I am not sure that Luke’s main point here is to say something – positive or negative – about the status of women. The

¹¹² Holly E Hearon, “Luke 10:38-42,” *Interpretation* (October 2004): 393.

¹¹³ Green, *The Gospel*, 435.

¹¹⁴ Junghyung Kim, “Three Different Readings of Luke 10:38-42: Gadamer, Habermas, and Ricoeur in Dialogue,” *The Expository Times* 123(5, 2012) 219.

fact that the two persons who give hospitality to Jesus are women may not be central. The presence of patterns familiar from other places in Luke points in a rather different direction”¹¹⁵.

For Byrne, the point of the passage is what Jesus has to offer. Jesus is taking the context of the meal and saying that Mary, in choosing to listen to Jesus, is accepting Jesus’ hospitality. The portion that he is offering is his word. The hospitality exchange featured in Luke is where Jesus receives hospitality but at the same time he provides a deeper hospitality¹¹⁶.

There are possibly many interpretations, which can be divided into five principles/types:

1. Active/contemplative lifestyle
2. Justification by works/faith
3. Judaism/Christianity
4. Female careers/priorities/jealousies
5. Feminist manifesto rights to a theological education¹¹⁷.

The text should be carefully examined, being mindful of the audience to which one is delivering the analysis and also keeping in mind that the first audience would have been hearing the text rather than reading it¹¹⁸. Fitzmyer concludes that “the readers envisaged by Luke were not Gentile Christians in a predominantly Jewish setting; they

¹¹⁵ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke’s Gospel* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), 116.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹¹⁷ Schaberg, *Gospel of Luke*, 507.

¹¹⁸ Allie Ernst, “Martha from the Margins: The Authority of Martha in Early Christian Tradition,” *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements* 98 (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2009), 21.

were rather Gentile Christians in a predominantly Gentile setting”¹¹⁹. He arrives at this conclusion, noting that the work is dedicated to a person with a Greek name, although the name could also have been that of a Jew¹²⁰. Luke has eliminated from his account material that is predominantly about Jewish preoccupations¹²¹ and Jesus’ genealogy was traced back to Adam and God not to David and Abraham. Further, OT quotations were from the Greek translation LXX. Fitzmyer does allow that there may have been some Jewish Christians and some Jews in his audience¹²². The audience would be predominantly Greek- speaking Gentiles who were sophisticated and at home in a Hellenistic urban setting¹²³. The Gospel is directed at people of high status who were accepting responsibility for those at the margins of society¹²⁴. The community being addressed is better off than many but with poor people in their midst. Also the community is being encouraged to give to and share with those who are less fortunate in their midst¹²⁵. Theophilus was a man of rank associated with the church but feeling out of place in the church community and Luke was writing for anyone in that situation¹²⁶. In summary, the Lukan audience was mostly likely predominantly Greek- speaking Gentile Christians, including people of high status.

The text on one level is a story about two women and the different roles they played. It is an important message on the individual level of the women but it is more than that. It is also about the community of believers and how they should be acting within the community. It is an interesting challenge to think of the story with the characters being male rather than female¹²⁷ and if that would substantially change the interpretation and

¹¹⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 59.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Reid, *Choosing*, 17.

¹²⁴ Schaberg, *Luke*, 494.

¹²⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, Second ed. (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 170.

¹²⁶ Bock, *Luke*, 15.

¹²⁷ Hearon, *Luke*, 393.

emphasis placed on the actions in the pericope. In the context of the time the characters are not interchangeable as Mary is responsible for the running of the household and Martha would be expected to be helping her look after their guests¹²⁸. See below for further discussion on this point.

Personally, I have never felt threatened by the text as some women have felt. So, I resonate with Veronica Koperski's comments:

“Never having had a strong emotional response to the passage myself, I was somewhat taken aback by the intensity of reaction from women and men who told me how angry their mothers had always been when this passage was the subject of preaching.... many, perhaps the majority, of Christian women (at least those of my generation and older) strongly identify with Martha and resent what is perceived as the unfairness to her portrayed in this passage in liturgical preaching”¹²⁹.

It appears that the issues some women have had with the text may stem from the interpretation of the preachers they have listened to rather than the text itself. If the women felt that the text was denigrating their role in the house, then a negative reaction is understandable.

However, if the text is specific to a particular context, then one must be careful to interpret the passage in that context. The story is set immediately after the parable of the Good Samaritan in the travel narrative on the journey to Jerusalem. The passage

¹²⁸ Malina, *Social - Science*, 394.

¹²⁹ Veronica Koperski, “Women and Discipleship in Luke 10.38-42 and Acts 6.1-7: The Literary Context of Luke-Acts,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 162.

states “now as they were on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home” (10:38). Immediately some questions arise such as “they were on their way” but “he entered a certain village” – who was he? What happened to them? It appears that those who were with him disappeared, or went elsewhere or were superfluous to the needs of the story and so were not mentioned. Green says that Jesus’ travelling companions disappear from view so that the spotlight will fall on Jesus¹³⁰. Luke edits the episode to obtain the narrative effect that he needs to make his point¹³¹. Therefore, it is likely that the group travelling with Jesus are still with him although not mentioned in the text. How a plot and characters are structured is one of the ways that a storyteller can transmit the values he is wanting to portray¹³². Jesus is not named in the passage, but we assume in the context that the “he” must be Jesus. Further, the village is not named, which is probably due to Luke wanting to fit the story in at this point in his narrative rather than be geographically correct. “A woman named Martha welcomed him into her home”; this tells us that Martha was the householder.

The significance of Martha being the householder and her sister welcoming a single man into their home in the culture of the time has been cause for some comment. However, if the man was known to the family then it was acceptable¹³³ and as noted above it may be assumed the group travelling with Jesus were there also. It seems that the status of women varied across the regions. Some literature indicates that women were kept indoors and out of the public eye in a position of inferiority and submission¹³⁴, however this is not universal.

¹³⁰ Green, *The Gospel*, 435.

¹³¹ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 326.

¹³² James Malcolm Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 190.

¹³³ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 325.

¹³⁴ Ricci, *Mary*. 86.

“On the one hand, “there is debate about how far the segregation and domestic isolation of women had spread in Palestine”; on the other it is clear enough that a life shut into their houses could be led only by women of the upper classes, since the rest, having no servants, would have to go to fetch water from the well, work in fields and help their husbands in their business”¹³⁵.

Mary Grey concurs that women would have been doing domestic work as well as income-generating work similar to what we see in rural India and Africa today¹³⁶.

Martha welcomed him into her house, which indicates that she was a woman of some means, was known to Jesus, and could afford to extend hospitality to the itinerant rabbi. The dominant figure in the household then is Martha, as she was the one who received Jesus into her home and offered hospitality¹³⁷. Usually the running of the household was the women’s responsibility¹³⁸, in this instance, Martha’s responsibility.

Martha had a sister named Mary who was sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to what he was saying. Mary is given no other status than that of Martha’s sister and this gives the impression that she is of lesser status in the household than Martha. At first glance this seems innocuous enough; why would you not want to be listening to Jesus’ every word, especially if Luke’s audience/readers knew that Jesus had died and had only been around for a short time? Every minute with Jesus would be deemed to be precious. Mary sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening to him seems to indicate the position

¹³⁵ Ibid., 87.

¹³⁶ Mary Grey, “Rescuing Martha from the Dishes: A Challenge of Retrieval & Proclamation,” *The Pastoral Review* 1(Issue 5 2005): 15.

¹³⁷ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 116.

¹³⁸ Malina, *Social – Science*, 394.

a disciple would take, which one would consider to be a positive for women as it puts them on the same level as the male disciples¹³⁹. This has been disputed by Schaberg and Ringe as they think that this picture is not consistent with how a disciple of a rabbi in that time would be acting¹⁴⁰. They would not just be sitting at the feet of the rabbi but interacting with him, discussing the topic, asking questions, challenging and debating. However, this does not appear to be the situation depicted here, as Mary is portrayed as listening. Mary does not preach or instruct the community; here she is portrayed as receptive and passive¹⁴¹. If the disciples are present, then, they are also silent. If they are present then both males and females are portrayed in the same way by Luke in this pericope. Luke has edited the story giving the bare details and his picture is one of Mary acting as a disciple.

The next part of the story as told by Luke is that Martha is busy, distracted with many tasks or much service, and comes to Jesus and asks him to tell Mary to come and help her. It is curious that Martha did not speak directly to her sister and ask for help. One would assume that would be the natural thing to do, rather than ask Jesus. As the householder, as depicted in this story, Martha should have had enough status to ask her sister to come and help. Is it a cultural issue and Martha felt she had to defer to the visiting male or that Jesus was a good friend and she felt that he may have had more influence over Mary as Mary was sitting and listening to Jesus? It may simply be that Martha did not want to interrupt Jesus as he was teaching. Was Mary, presumably as the younger sibling, perhaps used to Martha telling her what to do, offering passive resistance to her sister?¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Loveday C. Alexander, "Sisters in Adversity: Retelling Martha's Story," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 198.

¹⁴⁰ Schaberg, *Gospel of Luke*, 508.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 508.

¹⁴² Hearon, *Luke*, 394.

The situation is usually presented as a hospitality scene with Martha emerging from the kitchen as she has been preparing food for their guest. Some do not see this as necessarily a situation with Martha being busy in the kitchen as the “text does not explicitly refer to a meal or serving at table”¹⁴³. It is possible that Martha is busy, but with other matters such as being the head of a busy house church. Mary D’Angelo states “that Luke envisages both women as disciples, and that in the author’s view, Martha’s appeal to Jesus expresses a concern with Christian ministry rather than with table service as a form of hospitality”¹⁴⁴. However, there is no indication in the text that Martha is overwhelmed by house church issues. It is more likely that she is busy catering for the large group she has welcomed into her home.

The pericope starts with the group travelling, coming to the village and being welcomed into Martha’s home. One would expect that Martha, having invited them into her home, would be wanting to make sure that they were made comfortable after their journey. Part of the hospitality would be to provide a drink at least and most probably some food. This is basic hospitality that applies even today. Usually on arrival at a person’s house the host will ask their guests if they would like something to drink and or eat. Hospitality maybe part of what Luke is referring to, but there is also the issue of getting the hospitality in the right perspective and ensuring that enough time and effort is left to engage in what Jesus has to offer.

The dialogue as reported makes Martha sound a little petulant. In the space of two sentences, three times she speaks of herself:

¹⁴³ Koperski, *Women*, 169.

¹⁴⁴ D’Angelo, *Women*, 454.

1. "...my sister has left me
2. to do all the work by myself?
3. Tell her then to help me."

This sounds like someone only interested in her own situation and she may not have considered any other person's point of view. Has she considered the reasons that Mary left her to do all the work? Were there others that could help but who were not (perhaps the missing disciples)? This is speculation, as we do not have enough information from the text to really know. Martha calls Jesus 'Lord', but ironically seems most interested in getting him to help with her plans rather than finding out what his plans are and doing them. That is, her focus is not on trying to learn from Jesus¹⁴⁵. This may be understandable as she seems to be under pressure and as most of us would have experienced when feeling under pressure, often our patience diminishes¹⁴⁶ and we would likely have made a request similar to Martha's. Martha asking Jesus "do you not care?" indicates that she is feeling "abandoned, not only by Mary but also by Jesus"¹⁴⁷. So, her reality also encompasses a real sense of isolation¹⁴⁸. In her culture Martha's complaint would be seen as legitimate as her "honor and reputation depended upon her ability to manage a household"¹⁴⁹.

Jesus' answer is usually interpreted as a rebuke. Martha's name being used twice is a form of familiar and gentle rebuke¹⁵⁰. She is told that she is worried and distracted by many things, but there is only the need of one thing. If this is a hospitality scene, then Jesus' comment can be interpreted as 'stop fussing in the kitchen'. There is no need to be preparing so many dishes, just one dish is enough. Mary has made the right choice

¹⁴⁵ Green, *The Gospel*, 437.

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 327.

¹⁴⁷ Hearon, *Luke*, 394.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹⁴⁹ Malina, *Social – Science*, 271.

¹⁵⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 328.

in sitting at Jesus' feet and listening and she will not be directed to go and help prepare too much food. Mary is not passive, as she has chosen to sit and listen to Jesus. Jesus "is taking the meal context and transforming it into an image of what *he*, as distinct from the sisters, has to offer... But he has a deeper hospitality to set before them: the hospitality of his word, "the better portion," which Mary has recognized and chosen to take"¹⁵¹. The essence of hospitality is to be attentive to the guest and "the rest is optional"¹⁵².

If it is not a hospitality scene and Martha is busy organising the local church community, then the rebuke is strong, as it is not acknowledging her role and the importance of it for the community. Passive Mary listening quietly at Jesus' feet is the role that is preferred here. However, Mary may not be passive at all, as noted above, as she has chosen to sit and listen to Jesus. Also, in her culture it would be seen that she is acting as a man would act¹⁵³.

Martha's hospitality, her practical provision of the needs of Jesus and those with Jesus is vital to the mission¹⁵⁴. Without their basic needs being met by people such as Martha, those travelling with Jesus would not have been able to go far or do very much. Martha, in the same way as the women in 8:1-3, is providing for Jesus and the disciples out of her own means. Martha is a strong character who interrupts Jesus and demands attention and help. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as such people are often the ones who get things going and keep things moving and on track. However, Martha has often been portrayed as a woman fussing and/or nagging rather than a woman with a busy schedule who is trying to achieve an important task. Alexander

¹⁵¹ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 117.

¹⁵² Johnson, *The Gospel*, 174.

¹⁵³ Malina, *Social – Science*, 271.

¹⁵⁴ Alexander, *Sisters in Adversity*, 199.

comments that “male preachers, in my own experience, rarely avoid falling into this patriarchal trap”¹⁵⁵. Mary, on the other hand, is often portrayed in a more positive light as she has chosen the better part according to the Lukan Jesus. Is this because she appears more pliable and easier to control than Martha? Mary is sitting quietly listening to the dominant male (actually the only male specifically mentioned) in the story, which would be very appealing to anyone who is trying to show that a woman’s place is to be quiet and attentive.

Hearing and doing are part of discipleship in Luke. So why is Mary’s passive listening better than Martha’s doing? Is Luke saying that Martha has been too busy doing and has not taken time out to listen? In this pericope, it is being emphasised that it is important to take time to hear the word, that is, to personally adjust priorities to take the time to hear the word and not to rely only on what others have heard. If that is a message that can be taken from the passage, then it is not demeaning women, as it is a principle that both men and women should follow. The Lukan audience would have been those listening to the gospel being read rather than reading the account themselves, and they are being encouraged to hear and then to do¹⁵⁶. Hospitality and the preparations necessary to be a good host are important, but hearing Jesus’ word is of greater importance. With this in mind, it would cause a reprioritising of a person’s life to put the gospel first and this is necessary in the life of a disciple¹⁵⁷. The importance of hearing and doing is mentioned several times in Luke. “I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them” (6: 47). It is likened to the building of a house and the foundations being dug deeply into rock and consequently can withstand storms that assail it (6: 46-49). In 8: 21 Jesus says, “My mother and my

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 199.

¹⁵⁶ Dinah Simmons, “Martha and Mary: Women in the Gospels of Luke and John” (M.T.S. thesis, Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2006), 25.

¹⁵⁷ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 328.

brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” Those who hear and then act are like close family members to Jesus. Further in 11: 28 Jesus says “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” Hearing and doing bring favour or blessing.

Is the passage saying that Mary’s position was better than Martha’s? D’Angelo notes that a more complete translation and interpretation of Luke 10:39 would be:

“And Martha had a sister Mary who also having sat at the feet of Jesus was listening to/used to listen to his word” ... once it is recognized that sitting at Jesus’ feet and hearing his word indicate discipleship, the meaning should be clear Martha who received Jesus has a sister who, like Martha herself, was a disciple”¹⁵⁸.

Sitting at Jesus’ feet “is a technical term for “being a disciple””¹⁵⁹. If the translation is “who also having sat at the feet of Jesus”¹⁶⁰ then, as mentioned above, both women are disciples.

However, Jesus’ rebuke to Martha appears to be saying that Martha’s request threatens to take away from Mary’s discipleship¹⁶¹. It does appear that Luke is making the story indicate that women’s ministry should be passive and silent, faithfully listening to the teacher. Sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening is different from being passive and silent. Actively listening and thinking about what is being said is not passive. Mary, it

¹⁵⁸ D’Angelo, *Women*, 454.

¹⁵⁹ J. Lyle Story, “The Discipleship of Women – From Jesus’ Birth to the Empty Tomb,” *Priscilla Papers* 21, no.1 (Winter 2007): 19.

¹⁶⁰ D’Angelo, *Women*, 454.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 455.

would appear, is learning from the rabbi and committing to memory what she is being taught.

Martha's doing or action is coming from a place of worry and distraction¹⁶². "True discipleship is both interior and exterior: outer actions mirror an inner disposition"¹⁶³. Jesus appears to be saying to Martha to slow down and examine where you are coming from, where is this worry coming from and why are you distracted? Perhaps it is time for Martha to take time out and to sit at Jesus' feet and get some encouragement, insight and refreshment and so she would be able to better serve Jesus and others.

"The episode makes a subtle point. Frenetic service, even service of the Lord, can be a deceptive distraction from what the Lord really wants.... Here the cares and worries seem well justified – are they not in the service of the Lord? But precisely therein lies the power of the temptation, the great deceit under the guise of good. True hospitality – even that given directly to the Lord – attends to what the guest really wants and has to give"¹⁶⁴.

Simmons sees the real distinction between Mary and Martha as that of distraction versus attentiveness, rather than doing versus listening¹⁶⁵. Perhaps it is both/and not either/or. A person can be distracted by being busy doing things, however good those things may be. Being distracted by being busy would mean that they are not able to be attentive.

¹⁶² John N Collins, "Did Luke Intend a Disservice to Women in the Martha and Mary Story?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 28 (3) (1998): 110.

¹⁶³ Simmons, *Martha and Mary*, 27.

¹⁶⁴ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 117-8.

¹⁶⁵ Simmons, *Martha and Mary*, 31.

Martha is focused on her tasks, but Jesus was focussing on her worry and distraction. Martha is doing what was praised in the Good Samaritan story, but she seems to have lost touch with the purpose and direction of her tasks and there is more to discipleship than just performing a task. There is the need to listen and then act and live by what you have heard. "Good deeds are nothing more than good deed unless they are nourished by sitting at the Lord's feet, listening to his teaching"¹⁶⁶. Simmons notes that throughout Luke's gospel there is a noticeable stress on the "believer's attitude and interior motivation. It is not unreasonable, then, to see 10:38-42 as contrasting two attitudes"¹⁶⁷. The pericope on its own is an unbalanced view of discipleship, as its focus is on hearing and it would appear that Jesus is emphasising hearing over doing. However, the pericope follows on from the Good Samaritan which has a focus on doing. If the two are taken together then a more balanced view of discipleship is available to the auditor¹⁶⁸. The pericope echoes the "struggle to be faithful to the demands of ministry, and, in that ministry, to be faithful to Jesus. It is not a matter of one or the other. It is learning to hold both Martha and her sister Mary in dynamic tension"¹⁶⁹. Taking any pericope in isolation will not give a full view of the qualities of a disciple as it would not be possible to fit all the qualities into one brief story. Simmons lists the qualities of a disciple as seen in Luke as "prayer, hospitality, listening, compassion, obedience, repenting, integrity, fearlessness, right use of riches, not worrying, faithfulness, humility, forgiveness, gratitude, renouncing possessions, and singlemindedness"¹⁷⁰. This list shows how improbable it would be to be able to fit an illustration of each of the qualities into a short story.

¹⁶⁶ Francis J. Moloney, *Woman: First Among the Faithful: A New Testament Study* (Victoria: Dove Communications, 1984), 62.

¹⁶⁷ Simmons, *Martha and Mary*, 31.

¹⁶⁸ Moloney, *Woman: First Among the Faithful*, 62 also Simmons, *Martha and Mary*, 31-3.

¹⁶⁹ Hearon, *Luke*, 395.

¹⁷⁰ Simmons, *Martha and Mary*, 63; see also Reid, *Choosing*, 21-54.

The pericope is concerned with more than just a comment on the place of women within the Christian community. The points made about discipleship are applicable to both men and women. Distraction, busyness and their effect on being able to practice good priorities are applicable to everyone. Martha was not doing anything wrong of itself by providing good hospitality. Being distracted by doing too much (providing too much food) is the issue, as it meant that she did not have time to be with Jesus and learn from him.

The Lukan portrayal of women is influenced by the times in which Luke was writing. It appears that Luke was being careful to portray women and Christianity as fitting into the culture of the day. Luke from his research would have been aware of Jesus' teaching and also aware of the distinctions in the society of the time. Luke "wrote his account... reflecting the economic and hierarchical bifurcation, and he remained true to their teaching on wealth and poverty"¹⁷¹. Further,

"Luke, then, had to consider how to blend three factors (among many) into his story – the social hierarchy of his culture, the teaching of Jesus and the apostles handed down to him through his research, and the relevance of this to the members in his own Christian community – without offending the godly rich and the godly poor"¹⁷².

Luke portrays women as "generous and supportive, but also as silent and obedient."¹⁷³

Simmons also states that in the Lukan account "[w]omen are included and

¹⁷¹ Arlandson, *Women*, 187.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁷³ Simmons, *Martha and Mary*, 66.

acknowledged, but limits are set. He is looking for obedience, not questioning. He wants generous patrons, not demanding ones. According to Davies, the tasks of women disciples in Luke are three-fold: to hear, to obey, and to provide financing¹⁷⁴. This may be a slightly jaundiced view of the portrayal of women in Luke. Some more positive aspects of the gospel are that there is a significant number of women mentioned, which may be a reflection of the number of women and their involvement in the early Christian movement. The Lukan portrayal may downplay the actual position of women in an attempt to make it culturally more palatable. Jesus' message was a radical message and care must be taken not to be too narrow in our interpretation of the passage.

“True service must be preceded by the non-sexist response of genuine discipleship. The response of faith and listening to Jesus are universal in nature and provide the common and equal ground between women and men. This is Jesus' radical message, which effected changes in Christianity in the first century A.D. Women, as well as men, are summoned by Jesus to responsive “discipleship” to Jesus' words. The Jesus story could not be told without a realistic narration detailing the women who were touched by the radical Jesus; they surely belong to the company of disciples¹⁷⁵.

In summary, in this pericope, the importance of hearing the word is emphasised. This applies to men as well as women. Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him is indicative of the position a disciple would take. Women in Luke are portrayed as disciples even if not given the explicit designation of disciple. The status of women as

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁷⁵ Story, *The Discipleship of Women*, 19.

disciples is important when the resurrection narrative is being examined as will be seen below.

4. RESURRECTION

The climax of the Gospel of Luke is the resurrection of Jesus. This most important event in the life of Jesus has far-reaching and life-altering consequences. Luke, having researched the events he portrayed in the gospel, has chosen to recount the event in a particular way. Luke's depiction of the event of the resurrection and the people who were first at the scene is deliberate. The women from Galilee are depicted as the first at the scene of the empty tomb; they are the first witnesses to the evidence of the resurrection. What is the significance, if any, of women being portrayed as the first at the tomb after the resurrection? Keeping in mind what has been discussed previously about the women in Luke's narrative, the significance of the women at the tomb will be investigated.

The Lukan account of the death of Jesus states that at the crucifixion "all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:49). When Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body down from the cross, the women who had followed him from Galilee, followed and saw where and how Jesus was laid. The word translated as "saw" (Luke 23:55) means "to look intently at", which indicates that the women when they returned to the tomb knew exactly where it was and would not have returned to the wrong tomb¹⁷⁶. The women were eyewitnesses to the burial of Jesus¹⁷⁷. Then they went away and prepared the spices and ointments that they would use to anoint Jesus' body. Once again, the women are "providing" for Jesus out of their resources (8:3)¹⁷⁸. Luke's description of the burial puts the reader's focus on the body of Jesus¹⁷⁹. They did not

¹⁷⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 706; Marshall, *The Gospel*, 881.

¹⁷⁷ Johnson, *The Gospel*, 385.

¹⁷⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 1525.

¹⁷⁹ Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 152.

return to the tomb until after the Sabbath as they were resting “according to the commandment” (23: 56b). Having seen where Jesus was laid, they could return and anoint the body when the Sabbath was over. The women return to the tomb at early dawn with the spices, only to find that the stone had been rolled away and there was no body in the tomb. The Lukan account does not mention the tomb being sealed with the stone, but seems to assume that the audience will know that a tomb would be sealed with a stone.

The requirements of Jewish law meant that the tombs were outside the walls of Jerusalem¹⁸⁰. Tombs were cut into the limestone hillsides and were six by nine feet in dimension¹⁸¹. Bodies were placed on shelves, body-shaped depressions or niches¹⁸². The entrance to the tomb was sealed with square or rectangular blocks which kept grave robbers and animals out and impurities in¹⁸³. The round stone in a channel which could be rolled into place was much rarer and points to the elite social status held by Joseph of Arimathea¹⁸⁴. Once the flesh of the corpse had decomposed the bones were placed in ossuaries and placed in the ancestral burial place¹⁸⁵. The tomb could then be reused. Jesus was given the honour of using a tomb that had never been used (Luke 23:53)¹⁸⁶.

The women came to the tomb not expecting the resurrection. They had seen Jesus crucified, die and be buried. The women were not expecting the resurrection as they had not expected that the one they thought would be their Messiah would be killed¹⁸⁷. As we have seen, they were eye-witnesses both to the reality of Jesus’ death and to

¹⁸⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 703.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 703.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 704.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Garland, *Luke*, 939.

¹⁸⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 703.

¹⁸⁶ Garland, *Luke*, 939.

¹⁸⁷ Tom Wright, “The Surprise of the Resurrection,” in *Jesus, The Final Days*, edited by Troy A. Miller (London: SPCK, 2008), 91.

the location of the tomb. The women would have been dealing with the shock of seeing Jesus die the way he did. They would also have been dealing with significant grief. Having spent considerable time with him in the preceding years, the women's grief would have been quite intense at the time of them going to the tomb. They came with the spices to finish the proper burial procedure to make sure that the respect that was due to Jesus was afforded to him by finishing the process. They had come to perform the last service or 'provision' that they could do for someone they loved¹⁸⁸. If they had been expecting the resurrection, then they would not have needed to go the effort and expense of preparing the spices for the body. It was not until the angels reminded them of what Jesus had said that they realised what had taken place. It was as Jesus had said to them in their journeying with him, as he taught them during this time.

Apart from not remembering what Jesus had taught them, what did resurrection mean to the women? What did resurrection mean to a Palestinian Jew of the first century? There may have been many different pagan ideas about life after death¹⁸⁹ but my focus here will be on what the Jews of Jesus' time thought about resurrection. There is a time of being dead before the resurrection occurs. The resurrection was thought to happen not currently but later, that is on the last day (cf. John 11:24). They would have been fully aware that once a person died they were dead and stayed that way. Death was a part of the life-cycle that the first century Jew would have been very aware of and would have been exposed to its reality on many occasions in the course of their life. The early Christians and the Pharisees believed in resurrection, whereas the Sadducees did not¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁸ Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, "Women in The Passion, and Resurrection Narratives," *The Way* 74 (Summer 1992): 46.

¹⁸⁹ Wright, *The Surprise*, 76.

¹⁹⁰ Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 20-21; See also Simon J. Joseph, "Redescribing the Resurrection: Beyond Methodological Impasse?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 45(3, 2015), 159.

There is no mention in Luke's Gospel about the women being concerned as to how they were to enter the tomb. It just states that the women found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb. It is interesting that there is no comment in the text as to how this had occurred. It must not have been an important enough detail in Luke's accounting of the episode to rate a mention, even though one could assume that it would have been of concern to the women. Wright notes that in the ancient world a story teller did not feel obliged to tell every little detail of every incident when they were relaying what had actually happened "any more than a good journalist, or indeed a real practising historian, would today"¹⁹¹.

The women are perplexed, but not overwhelmed or amazed¹⁹², by the absence of Jesus' body when they go into the tomb. They had expected it to be there, they had seen the body put into the tomb, so they had brought the spices to anoint the body. We are not given any insight into what the women may have been thinking. It is possible that they thought that the body had been stolen or that Joseph of Arimathea may have moved it to another place. We do not know what they were thinking except that they were perplexed. Luke was writing his account some decades after the event. As noted above, the details that Luke included were those that were significant to the development of the Lukan narrative. From this account, we can assume that the women were not expecting Jesus to have been raised.

Two men in dazzling clothes appeared and stood beside the women. This terrifies them and they bow their faces, which could indicate not only that they were afraid, but also that they were honouring the men, or that they were averting their gaze from the

¹⁹¹ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 648.

¹⁹² Francis J. Moloney, *The Resurrection of the Messiah: A Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the Four Gospels* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 79.

bright light¹⁹³. All three may be implicit here. The men were in dazzling clothes, signifying that they were from the spiritual realm/angels¹⁹⁴. That the men were angels is referred to in the Emmaus story where they recount that the women saw a vision of angels (24:23). There are two angels; there being two satisfies the need for two to be witness as prescribed in Deut. 19:15¹⁹⁵. The angels admonish the women, asking them why they are looking for the living Jesus in a tomb. They are told that Jesus has risen, literally 'has been raised'¹⁹⁶, he is not here, and are asked to remember what Jesus had told them in Galilee.

The proclamation of the resurrection is "made first to pious observant Jewish women, who happen to be followers of Jesus"¹⁹⁷. However, the women did not just happen to be followers of Jesus; they had been actively following him. Luke has mentioned twice prior to this that the women had followed Jesus from Galilee. First in 23:49 at the death of Jesus and again in 23:55, when they follow Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb. It is important that it be understood that the women had heard Jesus speak of his impending death and rising again in Galilee. If they had not heard Jesus speak of these events, then the angels could not have asked them to remember what Jesus had told them. The angels said to the women "remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again" (24:6-7). It is significant that they say "how he told you" and not just "how he told". This acknowledges that the women were in Galilee with Jesus and being taught by him. There is no passage in the gospel which predicts the passion

¹⁹³ Marshall, *The Gospel*, 885.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 885.

¹⁹⁵ Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus*. (Rome; Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 60.

¹⁹⁶ The NRSV translates the word as "has risen" but it is passive, literally 'has been raised', see Edwards, *Luke*, 710; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1545. Also, Bock, *Luke*, 1891; Garland, *Luke*, 937; Harrington, *The Gospel*, 386;

¹⁹⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 1542.

and resurrection that is addressed directly to the women. The angels saying “remember how he told you” indicates that the women had been present when Jesus spoke about the passion and resurrection, otherwise they could not have said “told you”¹⁹⁸. This being the case then Luke is indicating that the women were disciples of Jesus and that their presence as first witnesses is not incidental.

Jesus had told his followers, including the women, about these events (Luke 9:22, 44-45, 13:32-33, 17:25, 18:31-34, 22:15-23)¹⁹⁹. He was to be tried, crucified and would rise again. The events of the last days and the resurrection are all part of God’s plan of salvation and were foretold by Jesus²⁰⁰. The women remembered; they could not have remembered if they had not been there. They now understood and were inspired to go and tell what they had just experienced. It is not stated that the women believed, but it is implied²⁰¹, as they remember Jesus’ words and then act on this new revelation by going and telling what they had just learnt. To remember means more than just bringing back to mind the events, it must also be followed with action²⁰². Remembering not only brings the past into the present but also enables the imagining of a future in its light²⁰³. There was no commissioning, but the women went and told their story anyway.

The women were devoted followers and disciples and were eyewitnesses to what Jesus said and did in Galilee and now they are also witnesses to the empty tomb, the angels and thus to the resurrection of Jesus²⁰⁴. The women were not afraid to go to the

¹⁹⁸ Maria-Luisa Rigato, “‘Remember’ ... Then they Remembered’: Luke 24.6-8,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 272.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 272.

²⁰⁰ Bode, *The First Easter*, 64.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁰² Barbara E. Reid, “The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word?” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28 (2016): 21.

²⁰³ Megan McKenna, *And Morning Came: Scriptures of the Resurrection* (Plymouth: Sheed & Ward, 2003), 92.

²⁰⁴ Rigato, *Remember*, 279.

tomb, whereas the men had stayed at home apparently afraid to go out²⁰⁵. The Galilean women are now in a unique position as they are the only ones who have been witnesses to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This gives the women's witness unique authority²⁰⁶.

Having remembered, and consequently believed, the women went and told the eleven and those with them what they had just experienced, but they were not believed (Luke 24:9-11). The text states that the women "told all this to the eleven and all the rest" (v.9). They told the whole story, which would include what the angels had said. This was enough for them to remember and believe, but not enough for the men. The men were given "access to the significance of recent events"²⁰⁷ but dismissed the account. Sawicki maintains that words (telling a story) are not enough to enable someone to recognise Jesus as Risen Lord²⁰⁸. However, the women remember the words of Jesus and believe that Jesus had risen as he said he would when teaching in Galilee. The men did not have the encounter with the angels and had not seen the empty tomb at this point (see page 55-56 for further explanation). It was enough for the women to put action to the words they heard and remembered and to go and tell what they had just learnt.

At this point, Luke names three women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James out of all who had gone to the tomb. Two of the women had been mentioned previously during the Galilean ministry period (8:2-3), continuing the Galilean link. The naming of three women is significant as women's testimony was not

²⁰⁵ Reid, *The Gospel of Luke*, 2.

²⁰⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 705.

²⁰⁷ Green, *The Gospel*, 839.

²⁰⁸ Marianne Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord: Resurrection and Early Christian Practices*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 84, 89.

held in high regard, often being dismissed²⁰⁹. It may be a reference to the need for two witnesses to an event for it to be taken seriously (possibly referring to Deut 19:15). The naming of the women also means that the women could be questioned as to the veracity of the story. It also signifies that the story is well known and the identity of those who were at the tomb is also well known²¹⁰. Naming the women at the end of the account may be due to following a protocol where the names of witnesses are given at the end of their testimony²¹¹.

Luke reporting the presence of the women at the tomb (albeit unnamed) and they being the first witnesses to the empty tomb is significant, as it indicates that the testimony of the women was held in high regard by those who had informed Luke of the events²¹². Having researched the events of Jesus' life, Luke would have had to select which events he recorded. The presence of the women at the tomb could have been left out or their presence there significantly diminished. This did not happen and the events have been recorded with the significant role that the women played portrayed. Luke, if he had wanted to diminish the role of the women, may not have been able to do so if the story was already well known at the time of his writing. It is unlikely that such a story would have been made up with women being the ones to find the empty tomb²¹³. It would be more likely, at that time, if the story had been made up, to present the episode as having men being those who found the tomb to be empty and to get the revelation from the angelic beings as to its significance. I find it profound that the women were the first to receive the revelation of the resurrection.

²⁰⁹ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 607

²¹⁰ Licona, Michael R. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2010), 351.

²¹¹ Reid, *The Gospel of Luke*, 22.

²¹² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 51.

²¹³ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 607.

It is probable that the women would have talked amongst themselves about their experience at the tomb. The women may have checked with each other that they had each had the same encounter and revelation, that is, they had seen and heard the same things. Once told to the eleven and the others, it is also unlikely that the women would never have spoken about what they had experienced again. Fitzmyer's translation of verse 10b states "they and the others kept repeating these things to the apostles"²¹⁴, which picks up the nuance of the imperfect tense of the verb 'to speak' and hints that the women had to go over the account many times and yet they were still not believed. It is likely that they would have been recounting their experience not only to each other, but over time to others who had heard that Jesus had been raised from the dead. They are not messengers who only deliver the message once but they would have continued to proclaim their message, being faithful to witness to what they had seen²¹⁵. Consequently, it is likely that the story would have been well-known in the community and therefore an important section of the resurrection narrative.

It was known to the audience that the women named were important in the community. Luke had mentioned Mary Magdalene and Joanna earlier in the Gospel as being some of those who provided for the ministry (see Luke 8:1-3 above) and they were present when Jesus was teaching. Their importance had been established and their witness could be relied on.

Without any instruction being recorded, the women return to the eleven and the rest and tell what they had seen and heard. They are the first witnesses to the

²¹⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 1532.

²¹⁵ Reid, *The Gospel of Luke*, 22.

resurrection²¹⁶. If the women had not believed it is unlikely that they would have told what they had just experienced. It would be more likely that they would keep the matter to themselves. They were not believed. Luke states it in two ways: that the words were an idle tale and they were not believed. The men are being consistent with their culture in that they did not give any value to the women's witness. As Wright points out, it has been "repeated over and over in scholarship, but its full impact has not always been felt: women were simply not acceptable as legal witnesses"²¹⁷. This can remind us that the whole Christian community is the poorer for it when women are silenced²¹⁸. The word *lōros* translated as idle means "nonsense" and the English word delirious comes from the same word²¹⁹. The attitude to the women is condescending²²⁰.

The explanation for the empty tomb was given first to the women. The women remembering what Jesus had told them in Galilee and then understanding the significance of what they were remembering gives an indication that they believed. As Johnson writes, "Luke informs the reader that the women have come to belief, and the proper understanding of the event"²²¹. The women needed little prompting from the angels as they had held in their memory Jesus' words. They believed and their perspective for the future changes. The hope which was lost has been reinstated. The reality and finality of death has not had the final say for Jesus. Death is no longer final, as "He is not here, but has been raised". This gives the women a new perspective on the future and brings into sharp focus the words of Jesus in their memory²²².

²¹⁶ Johnson, *Luke*, 388.

²¹⁷ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 607.

²¹⁸ Reid, *The Gospel of Luke*, 5.

²¹⁹ Johnson, *Luke*, 388.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 388.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 391.

²²² Rosenblatt, *Women in The Passion*, 49.

The women were the first to be given the explanation of the empty tomb, which was problematic for men at that time, and their testimony was treated with disdain²²³. Not only were they women whose testimony was doubtful in their culture but also in a patriarchal society God's revelation was expected to be delivered to the men first²²⁴. The women at the tomb are given the revelation first, before the men. Consequently, they are then in the role of the ones to deliver the message to the rest of the disciples²²⁵. The status of the women has changed and there is a "conflict between men's culture and women's reality"²²⁶. Peter ran to the tomb and, according to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus, some of those with them also went to the tomb to see what had been reported by the women. Cleopas relates that they saw the empty tomb but did not see Jesus (24:24), which is the same as the women saw. The women, however, did receive revelation from the angels which Peter and those with him did not receive; the men knew of the revelation as the women had recounted to them the explanation they had received from the angels, but they did not receive it firsthand.

Peter ran to the tomb and saw that the linen burial cloths were there but the body was not present and was amazed. There is no record of Peter going to the tomb and witnessing the burial of Jesus. He must have received instruction from the women as to the location of the tomb. He had the information that the women had relayed to him and they had believed once they remembered Jesus' teaching, but Peter is amazed. The empty tomb only caused amazement in Peter, even though the women had told him what the men had said to them at the tomb. It appears that Peter did not remember Jesus' words and teaching, and so the empty tomb only caused

²²³ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 275.

²²⁴ Ibid, 275.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Rosenblatt, *Women in The Passion*, 50.

amazement. This does not indicate that Peter believed at this point in the story. He had forgotten what had been taught to them by Jesus on the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem²²⁷. He did not see the victory over death that the resurrection meant. It was not only Peter who did not remember Jesus' teaching, but the eleven (which includes Peter) and all the rest (24:9) did not remember. The women, it seems, were taking closer note of Jesus' teaching, as they remembered but the men did not.

Claudia Setzer disagrees with the interpretation that no one believed the women's report, even though that is what the account states. She says that even though it says that the women were not believed, "it is clear that Peter did believe them, because he immediately got up and ran to the tomb (24:12)"²²⁸. Just because Peter got up and ran to the tomb does not mean that he believed the women. It quite possibly means that he did not believe the women and was going to the tomb to confirm his suspicions that the women were telling tales. Peter may have believed that the tomb was empty, though not sure why and so went to see for himself to ascertain the reason for the empty tomb. He may not have believed that the women had seen angels or he may not have believed any of what the women were recounting. Having confirmed that the tomb was empty, Peter is just amazed. He does not make the connection with what the women said the angels had told them and what Jesus had taught them. It is not until Peter sees the risen Jesus that he believes. Further, Setzer uses the road to Emmaus conversation to back her viewpoint by stating that "Cleopas and the anonymous disciple relate the story of the women's testimony as if it had been believed, saying that they found the tomb "just as the women had said." So, Luke's statement that no one believed the women is disproved by the narrative itself"²²⁹. However, finding the tomb

²²⁷ Moloney, *Woman: First Among the Faithful*, 61.

²²⁸ Claudia Setzer, "Excellent Women: Female Witness to the Resurrection," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1997): 262.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 262.

empty as the women said it was does not indicate any belief. It just shows that the women were not telling tales. If there had been belief, then the two on the road to Emmaus would not have been looking sad when Jesus speaks to them (24:17). They would most likely have remained in Jerusalem rejoicing rather than walking away from a place which they thought was full of disappointment.

The “two of them” (24:13), that is the couple on the Emmaus road, were part of ‘the eleven and all the rest’ (24:9), although otherwise unknown to the reader. They would have heard the women recounting the events of the morning and as the story unfolds we see that they did not understand. They did not remember and believe. It is possible that the two are husband and wife or two men, or two women²³⁰. However, Cleopas is a masculine noun and so two women would be unlikely. I would like to think that it is a husband and wife and the wife had been to the tomb and witnessed the empty tomb and the angels whereas the man had not and did not believe the report. This cannot be supported by the text, as the account given by Cleopas does not indicate that one of them had been to the tomb. As they were walking the two were talking (24:14) about the recent events, then they were talking and discussing (24:15) and finally discussing them (24:17). Luke 24:23-24 refers to the women in the third person, which implies that both of these people on the road to Emmaus are distinguishing themselves from the women witnesses whom they are describing. These descriptions give the impression that the conversation was escalating from a talk to a more intense discussion²³¹. Perhaps they were discussing what it all meant and may have had a difference of opinion. If they were a couple then the woman may have believed the women’s report but the man had difficulty in believing what they had been told. It can be seen that they

²³⁰ Loretta Dornisch, *A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), 225.

²³¹ Paula Gooder, *This Risen Existence: The Spirit of Easter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 20.

were leaving behind or running away from recent events and their discussion may have been around trying to make sense of it all²³². Into the scene comes Jesus, the audience is told, and he walks with them. The two did not recognise Jesus. We are told that their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus and they were sad (24:16-17).

Why did they not recognise Jesus? If as the account says they were part of the groups that had been with Jesus, one would think that they would have been very familiar with Jesus. They would have known his voice, mannerisms, walk and his appearance very well. One reason that they did not recognise Jesus could be, as the text says, because they were kept from recognising him (24:16). Having known Jesus well, one would expect that the couple would have recognised Jesus much sooner than they did, but they did not recognise him. Could this be because of the treatment that Jesus had received prior to crucifixion had disfigured him? The Lukan account gives few details of the treatment Jesus received except to say he was beaten (22:63). This hardly seems enough to make Jesus unrecognisable. The account does not give enough clues as to why they did not recognise Jesus. However, as Edwards notes, it is the divine passive operating here, their lack of recognition initially and subsequent later recognition is due to divine agency²³³. It would seem that the appearance of the risen Jesus is different in some way to Jesus before the resurrection²³⁴. Exactly what the difference is, if there is a difference, we are not told except that they were kept from recognising Jesus.

Though it appears that on a level other than the physical they did recognise him, as later in the account they state that their hearts burned within them when Jesus was talking to them about the scriptures (24:32).

²³² McKenna, *And Morning*, 95.

²³³ Edwards, *The Gospel*, 716.

²³⁴ Marshall, *The Gospel*, 891.

The couple heading to Emmaus must have been expecting a different type of Messiah as they say that they had “hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (24:21). The hope was that the Messiah would deliver them from the oppression of the rulers of the day. They had lost hope after Jesus’ death and consequently they are sad (24:17). However, Luke in 24:7 is emphasising that Jesus must be “handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again” which is a different type of Messiah to what they were expecting. Then, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus reminds the two that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and then enter his glory (24:26). It was in God’s purpose for Jesus to die and be resurrected. The disciples were expecting a Messiah who would overthrow the current regime, but God’s plan was more far reaching than that of the current physical situation. “They have not understood the significance of the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They are yet to discover that the resurrection of Jesus is “the resurrection of the Messiah”, but “the Messiah of God” (see 9:20), not the Messiah of their expectations”²³⁵. The account does not say that they could not recognise him, but that they were kept from recognizing him. This suggests that God may have intervened²³⁶ in their being able to recognise him or that resurrection was so far from their thoughts that their minds were unable to recognise Jesus.

As the account proceeds the reason for the intervention becomes clearer. Jesus asks the two what they were discussing and they were amazed that Jesus appeared not to know what had just taken place in Jerusalem. Surely this is supreme irony. They recounted the events to Jesus. It is now the third day since Jesus died and the women had been to the tomb but the tomb was empty. Angels had explained to the women that Jesus was alive. Some of their group had gone to the tomb and it was just as the

²³⁵ Moloney, *The Resurrection*, 83.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

women had described, but they did not see the risen Jesus. The couple still did not understand the significance of the events, they only see the facts²³⁷. The disciples had been told by Jesus that something would happen on the third day (Luke 9:22, 18:33, possibly 13:32) but they have not been able to put the teachings they received together with the events that had taken place. The women did not see the risen Jesus either, but once the angels spoke to them, and they remembered what Jesus had taught them, it was enough for them to believe. It seems that the men need to see the risen Jesus for them to believe.

Luke states that some of the group went to the tomb, they saw what the women saw. They already had the knowledge of the teaching of the angels as the women did when they saw the empty tomb but they did not understand and believe. Luke states that they did not see the risen Jesus, indicating that seeing the risen Jesus was necessary for the men in the group to believe. The women had not needed that level of proof once they remembered. Jesus' reply to the Emmaus couples' account of what had happened earlier in the day is a rebuke. He calls them foolish and slow to believe what the prophets had declared and some emotion is implied as there is an exclamation (24:25). Jesus then gives them a scripture lesson and interprets the scriptures pertaining to himself from Moses to the prophets. At this point they still do not understand.

Reaching the village, still not recognising Jesus, the two encourage him to stay with them as it is almost evening. They were having a meal when Jesus took the bread and blessed and broke it. This is unusual as Jesus was the guest of the two and the custom was that host would have broken and blessed the bread. This action causes

²³⁷ Moloney, *The Resurrection*, 84.

the two to recognise Jesus. Was it the way in which Jesus broke and blessed the bread that reminded them of so many past meals? Did they see the nail marks in Jesus' hands as he broke the bread? Their "eyes were opened and they recognized" Jesus and he disappears from their sight (v. 31). The two acknowledge to each other that they were feeling some strong emotion in their hearts – 'burning' -- as Jesus was opening the scriptures to them on the road. It is only in hindsight that they recognize what was happening to them. They now understand what the women had been trying to tell them on their return from the tomb. It took Jesus expounding the scriptures (24:27), breaking the bread for them and their eyes being opened (24:31) to come to this point. Whereas, the women "remembered" and came to the understanding of the scriptures much earlier and more quickly than the two on the road to Emmaus. They immediately return to Jerusalem to share what they have experienced.

The encounter with Jesus is the first sighting of Jesus post resurrection in the Lukan narrative. Strikingly the women are the first to be told that Jesus has risen, but in Luke's account they are not also the first to see the risen Jesus²³⁸. The women believed without seeing Jesus. It took an appearance of Jesus to Simon and to those on the Emmaus road for them to believe. Jesus did not appear to the women at the tomb, angels appeared to them. It appears that Luke may be downplaying the importance of the role of the women by not having Jesus appear to them. Although it seems to me that the women believing on less proof than the men, gives the women a higher status. Returning to Jerusalem the Emmaus couple are told that Jesus has risen and he had appeared to Simon. They had not told of what had happened to them before they are told of Jesus' appearance to Simon (24:34). It is not clear from the account if Peter saw Jesus before those on the Emmaus road. Seeing Jesus on the Emmaus road is related in the account before Peter seeing Jesus. Jesus then appears

²³⁸ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 276-7.

to all of the group, but their reaction shows that there is still some unbelief. Jesus then explains the scriptures to the group. The “Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day” (24:46) and they had witnessed these things (24:48). In verse 44 Jesus tells them “I spoke to you while I was still with you -- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled”. This is the third time in the resurrection narrative that the necessity of the crucifixion and resurrection taking place to fulfil the scriptures as Jesus had taught them is mentioned. For Luke, the resurrection was the “god-given, scripture fulfilling completion of what had been true all along”²³⁹.

The group was slow to fully believe and Luke “has not played down their obtuseness at his resurrection”²⁴⁰. In 9: 23-25 Jesus had told them that he would undergo great suffering and be killed and rise again on the third day. Again in 9:44-45 they were told that Jesus would be betrayed but they did not understand and were too afraid to ask for clarification. A third time in 18:31-34 they were told that all that was written by the prophets would be accomplished. Jesus would be handed over to the Gentiles, mocked, insulted, spat on, flogged and killed and rise again on the third day. They did not understand what was being said and did not ask for an explanation so that they could understand. The resurrection came as a surprise to them. First the women, then the two on the road to Emmaus, then Peter, then eleven and all the rest and those gathered together came to believe (24:1-8, 9-11, 12, 13-35, 36-41)²⁴¹.

The tomb which held Jesus’ body was empty. The resurrection was a bodily resurrection, the grave clothes were there but they were not wrapped around the body.

²³⁹ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 436.

²⁴⁰ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 1540.

²⁴¹ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 657.

The linen was expensive and was unlikely to be left behind. In other circumstances such as the body being stolen, grave robbers would more likely have taken the linen and left the body behind²⁴². On the road to Emmaus Jesus did not look unusual, in as much as the couple accepted him as a travelling companion and discussed the events of the last days with him. They invited him to stay with them and partake of a meal. He took bread and broke it, which indicates again that Jesus' body had substance to it. However, Jesus could "dematerialise" and disappear from the sight of the couple, indicating that the risen body had some different properties to the human body. When Jesus appeared in the room where they were all gathered and startled the group, they are invited to touch him to demonstrate that he had substance and was not a ghost. As they were still disbelieving, he asked for something to eat and he ate the piece of fish that they gave him. Again, this demonstrated that the risen body had substance but was different to the pre-resurrection body in that it was not governed by the same physical laws that govern human bodies: Jesus could appear in a room without entering through a door. The appearances emphasise that the resurrection was physical and "Jesus appeared to his disciples in the same recognizable Jesus-form as before"²⁴³. Luke is emphasising that the resurrection was not "a mere resuscitation or a return to a former mode of natural, terrestrial existence"²⁴⁴. Also, a resuscitated body would have still been in very bad shape with all the wounds, blood loss and exhaustion experienced and unlikely to inspire or convince the disciples and followers that he was the Messiah²⁴⁵. Further, the Palestinian culture of the time "would scarcely been able to conceive of it as anything but a "bodily" resurrection"²⁴⁶ and "resurrection in Second Temple Judaism, by definition, concerns bodies being released from the mortality of

²⁴² Kevin L Anderson, *'But God Raised Him from the Dead': The Theology of Jesus' Resurrection in Luke-Acts* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 164.

²⁴³ Joseph, *Redescribing*, 159.

²⁴⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 1538.

²⁴⁵ Joseph, *Redescribing*, 161.

²⁴⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel*, 1539.

the grave”²⁴⁷. The Lukan audience, although not based in Palestine, would hold a worldview similar to the Palestinian worldview and not that of the 21st Century with all the competing philosophies and views on the makeup of the human.

Jesus then addresses the assembled group. The address summarises what had been said to the women at the tomb and to the couple on the Emmaus road. Each time more detail is given. The women were reminded that Jesus had predicted, whilst in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be given over to be crucified and rise again on the third day (24:7). On the road to Emmaus, that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and enter his glory. Jesus then enlightened the couple by interpreting the scriptures starting at Moses and the prophets (24:26-27). Now in the room with the group, Jesus reminds them that he had told them that everything written about him from Moses, the prophets, and psalms must be fulfilled. Also, that the Messiah had to suffer and on the third day rise from the dead (24:44-47)²⁴⁸. The Lukan account is emphasising that the resurrection is the fulfillment of the scriptures – it is not an accident or random event. It is not mythology, “but is God’s gospel according to the Scriptures”²⁴⁹. God raising Jesus from the dead confirms him as the Messiah, the Son of God. The resurrection is the central event which affects theology and faith. It can be seen as the lynchpin of the Christian faith²⁵⁰.

After the death of Jesus his followers were consumed with grief and were stunned that the one that they thought would be their Messiah had died. He had not overthrown the current political regime and was dead in a stone tomb. Their hope was shattered and

²⁴⁷ Anderson, *But God*, 164.

²⁴⁸ Perkins, *Resurrection*, 165.

²⁴⁹ Ross Clifford, and Philip Johnson, *The Cross is not enough: Living as Witnesses to the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2012), 238.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

they hid away as they tried to come to terms with what this all meant. After the resurrection, when Jesus appeared to them and they became convinced that he was alive and truly was their Messiah but in a different way to what they had been expecting, they were emboldened to tell the world. This is portrayed in the book of Acts, but we do see the beginning of boldness in the Lukan Gospel with the women returning from the tomb and telling the disciples and other followers what they had just seen and heard and understood. The women were emboldened, even though they had not yet seen the risen Jesus. Luke does not give an account of Jesus appearing to the women and only gives an account of Jesus appearing to Peter, the couple on the Emmaus road and then to the group. This shows again how significant it is that Luke left the account of the women at the tomb in his Gospel. The account of the women at the tomb must have been very well known and the women involved well known and so the account could not be dramatically altered to suit any prejudice on the writers' part.

The resurrection is a more important belief to the early Christians than it was to Second Temple Judaism. Physical resurrection of the dead (reconstitution) ready for the final judgement and eternal life or damnation was part of early Jewish belief²⁵¹. Bones of the deceased were stored in ossuaries ready for the resurrection. The resurrection is central to the early Christians' belief and a vital part of their belief²⁵². "Resurrection went on being crucial and vital, and was one of the key things the church was known and persecuted for"²⁵³. The early believers held tightly and consistently to the belief in the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus prefigured the resurrection of believers; both entailed receiving a new body that was material and had differing properties to the body that they currently knew. That is, the resurrection body would be like the body of the risen Jesus which showed differing properties to the bodies of the

²⁵¹ Joseph, *Redescribing*, 159.

²⁵² Wright, *The Surprise*, 85.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 86.

disciples and followers. Although initially enlivened by God's Spirit (Gen 2:7), the pre-resurrection body was made of flesh and blood, which also meant that it would decay and die. Whereas the post resurrection body was of a state which did not decay and die and was enlivened by God's Spirit²⁵⁴. The resurrection gives new birth, new life, new hope²⁵⁵.

The women at the tomb were the first to be told of the resurrection and the first to tell others about it. It is important that the women were prepared and in the right place at the right time to receive the message of the resurrection. They had been listening and learning from Jesus as disciples. This prepared them to receive and understand the message of the angels. They were the first witnesses and the first to transmit the message of the significance of the empty tomb.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 88-89.

²⁵⁵ Clifford, *The Cross*, 38.

5. CONCLUSION

Women were the first witnesses to the evidence of the resurrection in Luke's Gospel. The resurrection is the climax of the Gospel and of primary importance as it confirmed that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah. This indicates that women were deemed to be worthy of the honour of being the first witnesses to the resurrection. The women were the first to come to an understanding of the meaning of the event of the resurrection.

The pericope Luke 8:1-3 shows that women were travelling with Jesus and providing for the ministry out of their resources. It is significant that the women are named as they could be questioned and the story verified. It is also significant as women were generally not held in high regard, yet they are named and their role in Jesus' ministry is described. Two of the women (Mary Magdalene and Joanna) are named again in the resurrection account. Luke 10:38-42 shows by their actions that women were disciples, even though Luke does not describe them as such. The pericope is emphasising the importance of hearing the word and women did that not only in this pericope but also whilst travelling with Jesus.

The women, named and unnamed by the Lukan author, accompanied and supported the itinerant ministry of Jesus. Without the women the ministry would have struggled to survive. In accompanying Jesus, they were exposed to Jesus' teachings just as the male disciples were. Although not named as disciples or explicitly called to follow, as the men were, the women were both disciples and followers. Luke naming some of the women is significant, as it highlights and records their role and would enable their story to be verified by the Lukan audience.

The message in the Gospel about the role and place of women is a mixed message. At times their importance is highlighted, and at other times it is downplayed.

The women were the first witnesses to the first evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, the empty tomb. The resurrection is the climax of the Gospel and they were the first to gain knowledge and an understanding of this most important event. The women had followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and witnessed his last days. They were at the crucifixion of Jesus, at his burial and at the empty tomb. They were addressed by the angelic messengers, and they remembered the teachings of Jesus. Then they shared what they had seen, heard and learnt. The women were at the tomb as they were continuing to serve Jesus. They had not abandoned him, even though their hopes were seemingly dashed. They diligently prepared the spices and ointments for Jesus' body whilst maintaining the Sabbath observance. As early as they could after the Sabbath had ended, they came to the tomb and were prepared to do the last service that they knew to do for Jesus. They were not expecting the miracle of the resurrection, but they saw the evidence of the resurrection, that is, the empty tomb.

The women were in the "right place at the right time". They were going about the devotion and respect for Jesus that they thought was an ordinary task. Their faithfulness brought them to this place at this time. Being in this place meant that they were available to witness something amazing. They saw the empty tomb where the angels spoke to them, causing the women to remember what they had been taught. The message from the angels enlivened their memories and they realised the significance of what they were seeing. The things that Jesus had been teaching them now made sense. Jesus had been raised and was Lord and Messiah. Women who

were not generally regarded highly by society were given the privilege of being the first to see and hear the news that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Their faithfulness was rewarded.

The account of the women at the tomb has been preserved in the scripture for all to read and ponder. It was not changed to reflect what would have been more palatable in that time –namely men being the ones to find the empty tomb. This account would have been well known at the time and it would not be possible to change it. Some of the women were possibly still alive at the time of Luke writing his account. The resurrection is the most significant event. It showed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and God raised him from the dead to show that this was the case. Jesus was more than just another philosopher and doer of good deeds. If he had not been raised from the dead then that would be all that could be claimed about him. Yet another good man who died for a cause. Being raised by God showed that he was indeed God's Son and the Messiah.

The Lukan account is not all positive for the women. The women delivered the news to those waiting behind and they were not believed. It was not until the risen Jesus appeared to the others that they started to believe. This is a mixed message about the importance of the women and their testimony by Luke. The women were allowed by God to be the first to hear that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The significance of this can appear to be blunted by the lack of positive response from those who were waiting behind. Also, Jesus did not appear to the women at the tomb and the first appearances recounted were presumably to men (Cleopas' companion may be an exception, but if it were a woman, she was not one of the first witnesses). This appears to be downplaying the role of women and adding to the mixed message about women in the Gospel.

My study has affirmed my sense that Luke's resurrection account can be greatly encouraging for women today. Women were the ones to whom the most significant event was first revealed. This occurred as they were preparing to do the last act of service for Jesus. It did not matter that they were not believed initially, they kept recounting what they had seen. Jesus backed them up by appearing to the disciples and the others who had not been at the tomb with them. Even today women's testimony may not be held in the regard that it should be. But God acknowledges the faithfulness and work of those who continue on in spite of the circumstances. Women today who are devoted followers and disciples of Jesus, as the women in the Lukan account were, can take heart. The Good News of the resurrection was first revealed to the women. It is significant that such an important event was revealed to the women and they understood its significance. This should embolden women today to take hold of the insights and revelation that they receive and to go and tell what they have learnt. Women in particular are encouraged to take heart, not be discouraged if they are not understood or believed at first and to persevere.

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