

The Road Back To Hope

The Men Who Missed Easter

Luke 24:13-35

Introduction

I invite your attention to a highway which led from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Turn to the gospel by Luke and look at chapter 24.

For the two disciples on this Emmaus road, this will be as significant a journey as the road to Damascus was to Saul of Tarsus when the resurrected Lord appeared to him. So remarkable is this event that Luke begins telling us the story in verse 13, by writing,

And behold . . .

Your translation may read, “And lo . . .”.

This could be translated, “You’re not going to believe what I’m about to tell you!” or “This is so amazing!”

What is?! What is so astonishing?

Luke continues in verse 13,

. . . two of them [the disciples] were going that very day to a village named Emmaus . . .

What day?

. . . that very day . . .

What day was that very day?

Sunday! (Luke 24:1) The same day of our Lord’s resurrection!

Where are they going?

Home.

Home!

“There’s nothing more for us in Jerusalem! We’re tired of waiting . . .”

Who are they?

. . . two of them . . .

Not just two of anybody, but two of “them”. They are not two of the eleven, we will learn later, but two of the faithful inner core of disciples. Most likely they were among the seventy men Jesus had sent out in Luke, chapter 10, to heal the sick and say to them, as recorded in verse 9b,

The kingdom of God has come near to you.

This had been their message – their food and drink – for three years of their lives. They had left their home in Emmaus to follow Jesus their Messiah. But now, they are going back home.

They have packed their bags; they have thrown away their sermon notes; they have tossed out their “Jesus is the Messiah” stickers, along with their banners which announced, “The Messiah is now appearing in Jerusalem”. They are going back home – dejected, disillusioned, and even despairing.

Four Scenes –

On The Road Back To Hope For Disciples

If Luke’s amazing story is treated as a dramatic play, it easily falls into four scenes.

Scene I – Two disciples whose hearts are overwhelmed with sadness

The curtain goes up on scene one to reveal two disciples whose hearts are overwhelmed with sadness.

They have three years “down the tubes”; their dreams are dashed; they have nothing to show for their hope but heartache and sadness. Jesus Christ was dead. The cross had punctured their hope!

Luke says, in verse 14,

And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.

The Greek text indicates these two are arguing and debating; recalling this and retelling that. You can only imagine their banter – back and forth.

“I thought He was this . . . I thought He said that . . .”

“How could we have missed it? . . . I thought He was the Messiah.”

“Yea, but how do you explain the miracles He wasn’t?”

“Remember when He did this . . . Remember when He did that!”

Scene II – Two disciples whose minds are going to be opened to the scriptures

While the two disciples are trudging their way back to life the way it used to be, scene two opens.

Look at verse 15.

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them.

I love this. Here they are, sharing their disillusionment about Jesus – and Jesus, for a period of time, the text implies, says nothing, He just walks along with them. The verb indicates that He overtook them from behind. He just sort of slid up behind them and walked along.

Continue to verse 16, which informs us,

But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.

This is an excellent translation of the passive voice of this verb – they did not recognize Christ because Christ did not want them to, and did not let them, until later.

In other words, Jesus comes up behind them, and they greet one another. Perhaps Jesus asks, “Hey, mind if I join you?”

And they say, “Yea, sure, why not? Just don’t interrupt our discussion – we’re talking about some very important things.”

Finally, the Lord does interrupt, in verse 17a,

And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” . . .

The word translated “exchanging” indicates a heated discussion. They are upset! And Jesus sort of casually interjects, “What are you men talking about?”

You could amplify His question to read, “What are you talking about that’s gotten you so upset? What’s gotten you two so worked up?”

Look at verse 17b,

. . . And they stood still, looking sad.

Literally, they came to a standstill – with a downcast face. They stopped in their tracks!

Then, in verse 18, we are told that Cleopas said to Him (with quite a bit of sarcasm),

. . . “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?”

“Are you the only one visiting . . .”, or “su monos” in the Greek, which is literally, “Do you live alone?” In other words, “Do you stay by yourself? Don’t you know what’s on everybody’s mind?”

Can you imagine this scene? He is, in effect, asking the Lord, “Do you ever get out?!”

Ha! Jesus could have said, “Yes . . . just this morning . . . as a matter of fact, just a few hours ago . . . and I left the door wide open!”

Poor Cleopas! He is addressing none other than the resurrected Lord, saying, “Where have you been? You mean you don’t know anything about all these things that have been happening around here?!”

Jesus could have said a lot of things, but notice His patience and grace. He responded in verse 19a, saying,

. . . What things? . . .

This is the master Teacher, drawing out of His students their innermost thoughts. Jesus just says, “Why don’t you men fill Me in.”

And do they ever!

For these next six verses, they unload the details on this poor man who evidently lives all alone and never gets out. Look at verses 19b through 24.

And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,

“and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.

“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.

“But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,

“and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.

“Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”

Are you catching this? They have all the pieces to the puzzle, but they still cannot put it together.

Imagine saying to Jesus, “It’s been three days since He was crucified and we’re tired of waiting around Jerusalem . . . nothing’s gonna happen . . . only rumors that His body is missing . . . but we haven’t seen Him!”

If you go back through their speech, you will find at least five things that were wrong with what they believed. These included:

- in verse 19 – Jesus was only a prophet, mighty in word and deed – that is wrong, He was more than that;
- in verse 20 – Jesus happened to be killed by Pilate and the Sanhedrin – it appeared that way, but He was actually delivered up by the council and will of God;
- in verse 22 – some women thought they saw visions of angels – those were not visions – they were real angels;
- in verse 23 – but now His body is missing – no it is not;
- in verse 24 – and while the tomb is certainly empty, no one has seen Him – that is not true because they are looking at Him!

I think for these disciples, the key to their error is in the last six words of verse 24,

. . . but Him they did not see.

They had all the clues, but they were still blind!

In the past they had served with the Lord; they had heard Him repeatedly refer to dying and rising

again three days after His death – and guess what day this is – the third day!

Hello! Is anybody home?!

However, Jesus still does not reveal to them who He is. We might think, “Now, Lord, now’s the time. Tell ‘em who You are!”

But no! Why not?

I believe it was because their faith in Christ was tied to what they could see. Jesus wanted their faith to be tied, not to sight, but to scripture. Here in scene two, the minds of these disciples are going to be opened to the scriptures.

Jesus now responds for the first time, and His words are extremely pointed, to say the least. He begins in verse 25, by saying,

O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Circle the word “all”!

He is saying, “You don’t believe *all* that the prophets have spoken. Not just the parts about the Kingdom; not just the parts about the reigning King, but the other parts too! The other parts that told you that, (verse 26),

. . . it [was] necessary for the Christ [the Messiah] to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

The cross was not the end – it was the beginning. It did not destroy the Messiah’s glory – it defeated the Messiah’s enemy. It was not a dead end – it was a doorway into eternal glory for them all!

Having given that rebuke, He, in verse 27,

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

The word translated “explained” gives us our word for “hermeneutics,” the science of interpretation. This could be rendered, “Jesus interpreted to them Himself, from the Old Testament scriptures.” Literally, “in all the parts or from all the books of scripture, Jesus explained to them how they applied to Himself.”

They still do not know this is Jesus!

Can you imagine this scene? Here is the resurrected Word explaining the written word. Here is the fulfillment of scripture, explaining the prophecies of scripture. Here is the Messiah, pointing out all the verses that revealed who the Messiah was.

Can you imagine this two hour walk to Emmaus? Jesus Christ is teaching a crash course through the entire Old Testament, and the way it all pointed to Him.

Imagine that – the plan of salvation in the Old Testament. You might say, “I thought you needed the Romans Road to get somebody saved.”

Well, you don’t! I did not say you do not need Romans – heaven forbid! The Romans Road is a wonderful tool, but you can actually reveal the Messiah, who will both suffer and conquer, in the Old Testament.

Wouldn’t you have loved to listen in on this message? None of the details are provided. This is the greatest sermon never recorded.

However, we do not even need the sermon He preached on that day to these disciples. Why? Because we have His study notes ourselves – we have the research material bound in leather on our laps.

This text challenged me, so I opened my Old Testament and began to wander through it. I imagined what I would have heard, had I been walking along from Jerusalem to Emmaus. I simply wrote down point after point as I traveled rapidly through the Old Testament scriptures, of the ways Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was truly pictured and prophesied in each book. Let me give them to you. In:

- Genesis – He is the prophesied seed who will crush the serpent’s head; He is the brother betrayed by His kinsmen, whose betrayal will lead to their deliverance;
- Exodus – He is the great “I AM”; He is the Passover Lamb whose blood protects His people from the angel of death and the wrath of God; He is manna from heaven and water from the rock;
- Leviticus – He is the tabernacle of God among men:
 - He is the brazen altar – signifying His death which gives entrance;
 - He is the brazen laver – promising to cleanse us from every sin;
 - He is the bread – signifying food that gives everlasting life;
 - He is the golden lamp stand – the light of the world that will never be extinguished;

- He is the altar of incense – perpetually interceding on our behalf;
- He is the veil – through Him is the only access into the presence of God;
- He is the ark – He embodies that holy place where heaven touches earth;
- He is the Holy of Holies – in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.
- Numbers – He is the great hope in whom all can safely put their trust; He is the great High Priest who will never fail;
- Deuteronomy – He is the Lord our God; He is the city of refuge where criminals may run for protection;
- Joshua – He is the champion over every enemy that stands in the way of God’s people;
- Judges – He is the angel of God, empowering the weak and pursuing the wandering; He is the perfection of grace and patience toward His wandering people;
- Ruth – He is the wealthy landowner who redeems His gentile bride from hopeless poverty; placing her in the family line of royalty; giving her the right to everything of His vast estate;
- I and II Samuel – He is the name of the Lord, in whose strength young men of faith conquer enemies and slay giants;
- Kings and Chronicles – He is the sovereign King behind and above all kingdoms, both pagan and God-fearing;
- Ezra – He is the keeper of divine promise to Israel and the hand that liberates His people from bondage;
- Nehemiah – He is the re-builder of broken lives and the restorer of broken fellowship;
- Esther – He is behind the scenes, outsmarting the evil one and seeing that His remnant remain, whispering into the ear of a young queen that for such a time as this, she has been crowned.
- Job – He is the majestic One who rides upon the wind and commands the lightning; He is the Lord of mystery who does not explain life, but reveals He is sovereign over all of life;
- Psalms – He is the rock of refuge, the Shepherd of the sheep, the tower of shelter,

the sweet honey of revelation, thirst-quenching water, a crucified Savior, and a sin-forgiving Redeemer;

- Proverbs – He is everlasting wisdom; divine counsel for those who accept His invitation to turn aside and listen;
- Ecclesiastes – He is eternal satisfaction over every earthly desire; He is the One to be remembered in the days of our youth;
- Song of Solomon – He is the Bridegroom who pursues His bride, stopping at nothing until she is safely in His arms;
- Isaiah – He is Emmanuel, the suffering Savior, the One crushed for our iniquities and the coming Prince of Peace whose strong shoulder will one day bear the governments of the world;
- Jeremiah – He is the branch of righteousness who brings justice and equity; He is the promised One who will write a new covenant on the hearts of His people;
- Lamentations – He is the father who disciplines the sons He loves;
- Ezekiel – He is resurrection power, breathing life into dry bones and bringing life from death; He is the faithful leader re-gathering His wandering flock;
- Daniel – He is the stone, cut without hands, rejected by kingdoms, yet smiting the false image and filling the earth with His glory; He is the one whose Kingdom will not end;
- Hosea – He is the faithful husband of the faithless wife;
- Joel – He is the hope of His people, the strength of the children of Israel;
- Amos – He is the wrath of God against oppressors; He is the promise of vineyards and gardens where His children will one day rest;
- Obadiah – He ascends Mount Zion as the deliverer who judges the kingdoms of this world and inaugurates His own everlasting reign;
- Jonah – He is the fulfillment of the sign that after three days and three nights, the Son of Man will come forth vindicating the righteousness of God and resurrection power;
- Micah – He is the One who pardons our iniquities; who does not retain His anger

forever; who delights in unchanging love; He is the one who treads our iniquities under His feet; who casts all our sins into the depths of the sea;

- Nahum – He is slow to anger and great in power; of Him the mountains quake and the hills dissolve, yet He is a safe haven for all who hide in Him;
- Habakkuk – He is radiant like sunlight; whose strength makes our feet like the hinds feet, and makes us walk on high places;
- Zephaniah – He is the One who will gather those who grieve and those who are lame and those who are outcast; He is the One who will turn their shame and despair into everlasting praise;
- Haggai – He is the victorious Lord of hosts who will shake the heavens and the earth as He overthrows the nations of this world; He is the One who will wear His chosen people as jewels around His omnipotent fingers;
- Zechariah – He stands with His redeemed on the Mount of Olives; His holiness will be praised, even by the inscriptions on the bells of horses' bridles as they gallop through the city of His glory – "Holy to the Lord" will be their praise for the Messiah;
- Malachi – He is the divine Refiner, sitting over the smelting pot of His universe, purifying His chosen people as silver and gold; He is the great King, who does not change; and for all those who believe in Him, He will one day rise with healing in His wings!

The hearts of these two disciples have been overwhelmed with sadness, but their minds have been opened to the scriptures.

Scene III – Two disciples whose eyes are opened to the Savior

Now in scene three, the eyes of these two disciples are opened to the Savior.

After arriving in Emmaus, notice verses 29 through 31.

But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them.

When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.

(In other words, He plays the role of host, not guest.),

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

When were their eyes opened? When He handed the bread to them; literally, “when He handed a piece to each one of them, their eyes were opened.”

What was it? It was that moment when they reached out and took the bread from His nail-pierced hands – His nail-pierced hands – that the light suddenly dawned. He opened their eyes and they realized who He was – and He disappeared.

The reason, I believe, Jesus showed them His hands last, is because He wanted to show them the scriptures first. Our hope is not anchored in what we see around us, it is anchored in what God has said to us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the question is not, “What do you see in order to believe?” but “What does the Bible say in order to believe?”

The apostle Paul wrote, in Romans, chapter 15, verse 4,

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

These disciples had lost hope! They were heading back to Emmaus – and do you know where that was going? It was taking them away from hope. It was the wrong direction!

My friend, Jesus Christ knows where you are – geographically, spiritually, emotionally. He knows the path you are on!

Are you without hope? Go back to the scriptures – they have a way of pointing you to the Author, and He is everything you really need.

Notice verse 32.

They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

Before they recognized the Savior, their hearts were burning with the scripture.

Do you need a fresh view of Jesus Christ? Go back to the scriptures; go back to the opening of your heart to the word of God.

I love this picture given to us in these verses. Do you see it? Jesus pursued them while they were heading in the wrong direction.

Perhaps, my friend, He is pursuing you too! What a gracious Lord.

Scene IV – Two disciples mouths are open for the Savior

Scene four takes place in Jerusalem, where the two disciples’ mouths are open for the Savior.

Look at verse 33a.

And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem . . .

That very hour! Never mind about the lateness of the hour; never mind about the day being nearly over; never mind about anything now – we are on the road back to hope! We are on the road to re-join the other followers of Christ.

Continue to verses 33b through 35.

. . . and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”

They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

They are telling the story as fast as they can get it out!

By the way, it is no surprise that Jesus Christ worked in this order – He opened:

- their minds,
- then their eyes,
- then their mouths!

As I Peter, chapter 2, verse 9, says,

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Their hearts were overwhelmed with sadness. But, Jesus chased them down and opened their minds with the scriptures. Then, their eyes were opened to the Savior. And finally, their mouths, in celebration,

were opened in the joy of their One and only, true | and *living* Messiah.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/18/2004 by Stephen Davey.

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