

Good Friday Devotional

Luke 24:13-35

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I recently read a short article relating the Road to Emmaus story to our times. Since this story in Luke 24 features one of the appearances of Jesus after He rose from the dead, I thought it would be a relevant devotional for Good Friday.

Good Friday is the day we remember Jesus dying on the cross for our sins; so that is what makes it a good day for us. But what makes it an even better day is we know that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day following His death... He died on Friday and was in the tomb Friday, Saturday and Sunday when He rose from the dead: or, to use a church term, He was resurrected on Sunday, the third day.

The term resurrection means Jesus' dead, mortal body was converted to a glorified, eternal body. First-Corinthians 15:20 says, "*Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*" The term "*fallen asleep*" here is a euphemism for having died. Jesus rising from the dead proves He was the Messianic Son of God He claimed to be. And the fact that Jesus is the "*firstfruits*" tells us that His body is the prototype revealing the kind of physical, glorified body His followers can look forward to when we are resurrected. Scripture tells us that all believers living and dead will be resurrected together at one time at the end of the Church Age when the Bridegroom comes for His bride, the church. And that could happen at any time.

The term "Christ" is transliterated from the Greek word *Christos* and it means, God's anointed. It is synonymous with the term "Messiah" which is transliterated from Hebrew. Just so you know, I like to use the term "Messiah" when I think it is

helpful to be reminded of the Lord's Jewish heritage.

Alright, according to Luke 24, it was on the original resurrection Sunday that Cleopas and a companion were walking the 7 miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus where they probably lived. They had been in Jerusalem for the Passover, one of the three feasts faithful Jews of that time were expected to observe in Jerusalem.

Cleopas and friend were discussing what had happened to Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Jesus caught up to them as they walked and joined in their conversation. You can imagine that the resurrected Christ probably walked at a brisker pace than the Emmaus-bound disciples in their mortal bodies. That tells us something about our future resurrected bodies, doesn't it?

Neither Cleopas nor his companion recognized Jesus, as it says in Luke 24:16, "*their eyes were restrained.*" Cleopas described Jesus to the unrecognized, resurrected Jesus as, "*a Prophet mighty in deed and word*" (per Luke 24:19). That was an accurate enough description but it reveals he didn't really know Jesus because a better description of Him would have been what Peter said in Matthew 16:16, "*[that Jesus was] the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Cleopas went on to explain "*how the chief priests and rulers delivered [Jesus] to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.*" He also said they were sad because they, "*were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel*" The Jews failed to recognize Jesus as their Messiah because most of the prophecies of the Messiah address His return, not His first advent. Thus, Israel was

expecting the Messiah to deliver them from the oppression of Rome as God used Moses to deliver Israel from another Gentile government. Since that wasn't the mission of Jesus' first advent, the Jews rationalized He couldn't be the Messiah.

Cleopas and friend were also astonished that some of the women followers of Jesus reported they had seen angels who told them Jesus was alive and discovered His tomb to be empty.

Jesus responded to this by saying,

“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

(Luke 24:25-27)

I often wonder what Scriptures Jesus must have brought to their minds to help the Emmaus disciples understand what had happened. I imagine He might have started with the very first prophecy of the Messiah recorded by Moses in Genesis 3:15 where God foretold the end of Satan who possessed the serpent that tempted Eve to sin:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

The reference to “her seed” speaks of the miraculous virgin birth of the Messiah who would suffer a bruise to His heel which represents a non-fatal injury. But Satan would have his head bruised which is symbolic of a fatal injury. Jesus was bruised when He died but He rose from the dead; Satan's end will be in the Lake of Fire, which Revelation 20:14 calls “the second death” ...a biblical term for spiritual death.

I can imagine Jesus might have pointed out that the Law of Moses was all about revealing to people their sinful condition before God. And that the Law impressed on us the need for blood sacrifice to atone for our sin (as it says in Leviticus 17:11).

The only way our sins could be forgiven for eternity is for the eternal, sinless Son of God to take on a human body in order to shed His blood on our behalf. While most Messianic prophecies are of how the Son of God would deliver Israel from a terrible time called “Jacob's trouble” in Jeremiah 30:7, there are prophecies of how the Messiah would suffer on behalf of all people. Jewish rabbis refer to these prophecies as “Suffering Servant” passages saying there must be two Messiahs. During the time of Jacob's Trouble, all Israel will recognize that there is only one Messiah who comes twice and that he's already been here once as Jesus. Or, as the Jews will call Him, Yeshua Hamashiach which is Hebrew for Jesus the Messiah.

One of the most important Suffering Servant passages that Jesus might have pointed out to Cleopas and friend is Isaiah 53 where verse 5 says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities” Use of the word “bruised” here connects this prophecy to the very first Messianic prophecy in Genesis. Isaiah 53 is effectively an Old Testament presentation of the gospel, the good news of the Messiah. We all need the Savior because “all we like sheep have gone astray.” And the Messiah, our Savior has borne “the iniquity of us all.” We are saved because, “by His stripes we are healed.”

Another important Suffering Servant prophecy is in Psalm 22 where it clearly describes the crucifixion of the Messiah 500 years before crucifixion was invented by the Persians as a method of execution.

Cleopas pleaded with Jesus to stay with them as they got close to Emmaus. Jesus did stay long enough to break bread with them. At which point they recognized Him as who He was then promptly, “vanished from their sight” per Luke 24:31. I think this is an interesting use of words in the inspired Word of God... While Jesus “vanished from their sight”, He was still with them even though they could no longer see Him.

As the Emmaus disciples reflected on their journey with Jesus, one of them summed up their experience by saying,

Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32)

The truth resonates and they had just been with the personification of Truth who helped them understand the eternal plan of God. So, what did they do? They left that very hour to hike the 7 miles back to Jerusalem to tell the original 11 disciples of Jesus their experience.

Alright, with that background refreshing us on the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, let's consider how this story relates to our times...

Emmaus represents our earthly village where we live. Our experiences with God and His people are represented by the city of God which is Jerusalem. As the Emmaus disciples were disturbed by what had happened in their world, we too are disturbed by recent developments in our world... we have the worldwide pandemic, the government's response to the pandemic, and the trajectory of our culture. As we reflect on today's discomfoting trends, it is easy to get depressed.

Today's trends depress us when we forget that the Lord is in control. He is allowing what is happening to serve His purpose. And what is that purpose? He is causing people to consider their mortality so that they may turn to Him for salvation and He is also setting the stage for His return!

- For there to be a global government in place when the Lord returns, the United States must diminish as a super power.
- For the centrally controlled socialist economy of the Tribulation to be installed, capitalism must fail through massive debt accumulation.
- For people to embrace the Mark of the Beast, they must accept various governmental mandates as the new normal.
- For the spirit of Antichrist to mature, all hints of a culture influenced by Christ-followers must be cancelled.

It is getting less and less pleasant to hang out in our earthly village of Emmaus. We need to head back to Jerusalem! The time spent keeping current on the latest corona virus reports is wasted time. Our time invested in God's cause has value both in this world and eternity.

Notice that the eyes of the Emmaus disciples were opened as a result of their fellowship with the Lord. We don't grow in our relationship with Him when we allow the concerns and fears of the world to consume us; only when we have fellowship with Jesus. And we do that by spending time getting to know Him and applying what He reveals to us.

We're going to conclude our devotional time of our Good Friday gathering with a song then transition to a time of fellowship for the rest of the evening.

When you go, go in the peace, joy and love of our Lord Jesus Christ! And never forget... He is risen!