

Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13–32

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
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Last Sunday, Ben shared with us Luke's account of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead. Today we are going to pick up where that left off looking at one of the most amazing post-resurrection encounters with Jesus. Two of Jesus' disciples carried on a conversation with Him not recognizing Him while they walked on the road to Emmaus.

I love this story because it shows the importance of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus. And God's prophetic Word is near and dear to my heart because it is what He used to help me see my own need for having Jesus in my life. This story of the encounter on the road to Emmaus can also be seen as a model of the journey Jesus makes with us today along life's walk where He opens our eyes, points us to His Word, and reveals Himself as our resurrected Savior and Lord.

I'm going to read the account of the road to Emmaus and then we'll take a look at what insights we can learn from it...

Luke 24:13–32

¹³ Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

¹⁸ Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. ²² Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³ When

they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴ And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."

²⁵ Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

²⁸ Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. ²⁹ But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

On the same day Jesus was resurrected, two of His disciples were walking from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. They were probably in Jerusalem to participate in the Feast of Passover and were returning home. These disciples weren't among the twelve who became famous apostles, but Jesus used them nonetheless to get the word out about His resurrection. It is important to recognize that we don't have to be famous for God use us. He uses just plain old average folks all the time.

Luke said the village of Emmaus was about seven miles from Jerusalem which would be about a three-hour hike for people accustomed to walking everywhere. As the two disciples walked, they talked about the things that were heavy on their hearts – all of what had happened with the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. It says here that they "conversed and reasoned" about these things which tells me they were trying to make sense of it... If Jesus really was the Messiah, why did He have to die?

While they were in the midst of this discussion, Jesus caught up with the two and started walking along with them. And they were miraculously prevented from realizing that it was Jesus who walked with them. Why do you think that Jesus didn't allow them to recognize Him at this point? I think it was because He wanted them to see Him as no one special, just some random guy on the road engaging them in a theological discussion. And by doing this, He modeled what He wanted them to do in the future.

The picture of Jesus joining in with us when we are talking about Him brings to mind the promise He gave us in Matthew 18:20, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* When we talk together of Jesus, we are essentially talking with Him.

Jesus as the consummate conversationalist asks the two what they were talking about that made them so sad. From this, we can know that Jesus had walked silently with them for a while, just listening as they carried on their conversation. Of course, Jesus would have known what they were discussing even before He caught up with them so His listening in on them was for their benefit.

Cleopas, the one whose name is recorded, responded with surprise that this fellow traveler was not familiar with what had happened to Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus probably smiled at this because He knew very well what had happened. Jesus skillfully played along with the conversation, encouraging the men to reveal their hearts. Even though He knew their hearts, there was value in their speaking about what concerned them. The men explained what they did know about Jesus...

- They knew His name and where He was from.
- They knew He was a Prophet.
- They knew He was mighty in deed and word and that He was crucified.
- They knew He promised to redeem Israel.
- And they knew others had said He rose from the dead.

These disciples had a hope that if Jesus was the Messiah, He would redeem Israel delivering them from their Roman oppressors. This is certainly what their Scriptures taught them. Moses said...

Deuteronomy 18:15 – *The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear*

As Moses delivered Israel from the tyranny of Egypt, they were looking for another Prophet to deliver them from the tyranny of Rome. They had numerous promises such as:

Zechariah 9:9-10 – *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.'*

Certainly, Jesus had presented Himself to the people of Jerusalem just the week before on Palm Sunday riding on a donkey. And with the healing miracles He performed that was prophesied the Messiah would do, He had to be the Messiah.

The hope of national redemption was not wrong; it was just that the timing for it did not align with God's plan. And Jesus would show them that their more significant personal hope was fulfilled in His suffering on the cross and subsequent resurrection from the dead.

The two disciples had heard reports of Jesus being resurrected but this was so fantastic they didn't believe them. It just didn't make sense with how they understood things. It bothered me at first that these two didn't believe the eye witness testimony because that is all we have today. But then I realized that their unbelief was before the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit which began later at Pentecost so seeing with their own eyes was important at that time.

Jesus Himself was frustrated that these disciples were slow to believe in light of all God had revealed through His prophets. Jesus told them that the problem with their belief was more in their heart than their head. We often think the main obstacles to belief are in the head, but they are actually in the heart. So, there is an emotional aspect to belief, it is not all just intellectual. There is a difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. As Jesus said in John 4:24, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Jesus was disappointed that these two disciples had not believed because the Scriptures revealed that the Messiah must first suffer for us and then be received in glory.

- The two disciples had lost hope because of their lack of belief.
- They had lost joy and had a sense of spiritual desertion.
- But they had not lost their desire for deliverance because they still were compelled to talk about Jesus.
- However, they had not yet understood the necessity of the cross.

In their desire to be delivered from the tyranny of Rome, they missed the different prophecies of how the Messiah would suffer on our behalf.

Some Jewish scholars referred to these prophecies as Suffering Servant passages. They expected there must be two Messiahs, one who would be the Suffering Servant and the other who would be the Conquering King. They did not expect these two Messianic roles to be fulfilled in the same Person who comes twice, first as our Suffering Servant and later as the Conquering King. Of course, the Jews really weren't watching for the Suffering Servant Messiah because they wanted the Conquering King Messiah to come instead.

One of the most amazing prophecies of the Suffering Servant is Isaiah 53:3-5 which reveals this about Him: *"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."* The use of the word "bruised" here should make us think of the Protoevangelium, which is a fancy Latin term for the "first gospel" – the very first prophecy of the Messiah given to Adam and Eve following their original sin. Speaking to Satan, God said...

Genesis 3:15 – *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 seed of the woman is a prophecy of how the Messiah would be miraculously born of a virgin. And the wound the Messiah would inflict on Satan would be a fatal one while the wound Satan would inflict on the Messiah would not be fatal because, as we now know, the Messiah would rise from the dead. The passage in Isaiah even explains why the Messiah had to suffer for us... He was *wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; ... and by His stripes we are healed.*

My favorite prophet is Daniel who reveals the Suffering Servant very succinctly saying in Daniel 9:26: *"The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself."* Before the cross, we might not know what it means that the Messiah would be cut off. But that is certainly what happened to Jesus at the cross, His mortal life was cut off. And it wasn't cut off for anything He deserved but He willingly gave His life for our benefit so that our sins may be forgiven.

The prophet Zechariah provides yet another example. Speaking of the time when Israel as a nation would realize that the Messiah had already come and was crucified, Zechariah 12:10 says: *"They will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."* Certainly, Jesus was pierced by the spikes that pinned Him to the cross. And all Israel will mourn when they realize they should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah when He came the first time.

Jesus probably taught the two disciples what was surely one of the most spectacular Bible studies ever. Beginning with the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible written by Moses and also what was revealed through the prophets, He told them about how the Messiah would suffer for us. Among the other things He could have pointed out on the Emmaus Road was how the Messiah would be:

- The blessing of Abraham to all the nations.
- The ultimate Passover Lamb.
- The ultimate sacrifice for our sins that all the blood sacrifices in the Law foreshadowed.
- The ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer as described in the book of Ruth.
- The Suffering Savior of Psalm 22 that vividly describes crucifixion and written by King David 500 years before this way of execution was even invented by the Persians.

Notice in Luke 24:27 that Jesus, *"expounded to them in all the Scriptures."* This describes how Jesus taught... The idea of expounding is to simply let the text speak for itself; exactly what we should do when we study the Bible. The Greek word for expounded is "dierneneuo" which has the idea of sticking close to the text. This means we should understand Scripture from a literal, grammatical, historical perspective not causing it to represent any fanciful allegories or speculative ideas.

When the three travelers arrived at the village of Emmaus, Jesus acted as though He intended to continue on down the road but the two disciples insisted that He stay with them because it was late in the day and He would need to stay somewhere. They still didn't know they were with Jesus but knew Him to be someone whose company they enjoyed and wanted to spend as much time with Him as they could. We too should be the kind of people others want to be with.

When Jesus sat down with the two men to share a meal with them, He took bread, blessed and broke it. These men were not present at the last supper Jesus had with his twelve disciples so they knew nothing of the sacramental nature of breaking bread with Jesus. Yet this is when their eyes were opened to recognize Him. Certainly, they would have understood the significance of this later when they learned of the Lord's Supper. What a time for their eyes to be opened, when the Messiah Himself broke bread with them so that they could remember that, "*this is My body given for you*" as Jesus said in Luke 22:19.

There were probably other things that contributed to their recognizing Jesus when He offered the bread He broke to the men:

- Perhaps it was the way He took the place of host with "a quiet air of majesty"
- Or the way He gave the blessing over the meal they would eat
- And of course, they may have seen the scars of His crucifixion when He gave them the bread

Whatever it was, they suddenly realized they were in the presence of the resurrected Jesus. Some little action, some dear familiar trait, told them in a flash this was Jesus.

As soon as the two men recognized Jesus, *He vanished from their sight*. Jesus' mission with the men was completed... He helped them see from their Old Testament Scriptures why the Messiah had to go to the cross and what it meant for all humanity. And they saw with their own eyes that He had in fact rose from the dead. What a blessing it is to know what we can look forward to following our own death.

Jesus vanishing from their sight reveals another amazing trait of what we can look forward to in our own resurrected bodies. Everything Jesus did in His post-resurrection appearances were for our benefit to better understand what it means to be resurrected. Jesus promised us in John 14:3, "*I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*"

We know that when Jesus completed His mission on earth, He ascended to be at the right hand of the Father in the spiritual realm. It looks like when Jesus disappeared from the sight of the disciples, He slipped into the spiritual dimension which facilitated His getting around the physical universe. And we will have that same capability because Jesus set aside His prerogatives of God when He was with us so that He could identify with those He came to save...

Hebrews 4:15 – *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* Jesus even attributed His miraculous works to the Father saying in John 14:10 that, "*the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*"

When Jesus left the two disciples, they reflected on their visit saying, "*did not our heart burn within us while He talked?*" Even when they didn't know it was Jesus, even when they were skeptical that He had risen from the dead, their heart still burned because of the Living Word of God He shared with them.

- God's Word can have this same effect on our own hearts, even when we don't know that it is Jesus doing that work.

Neither of the two disciples knew the other's heart burned until Jesus left. So, another reason Jesus left them was so that they could experience the fellowship of their shared experience with Him.

If we were to read on, we'd see that the two disciples left for Jerusalem that very hour at the end of the day to go share their experience with the other disciples. What they had learned about Jesus was too amazing not to share with others who could appreciate it. That is what we too should be doing: seeking out those who will appreciate what Jesus has done in our own lives.

Alright, I'm going to conclude here with some take-aways that stand out to me from this story about the road to Emmaus. But before I get to that, what do you find noteworthy about this story?

For me, we cannot overestimate the power of God's Word. Jesus used God's prophetic Word to help His disciples understand the plan of God. So, we should study His Word for our own edification and to help others by expounding on it from a literal, grammatical, historical perspective. We don't have to be prominent, powerful people for God to use us. We don't even know the name of one of these disciples Jesus used. We should expect to see Jesus everywhere and in all situations. And we should seek fellowship with one another. As iron sharpens iron, we grow closer to the Lord as we share our experiences with Him. And we should look forward to our amazing resurrected bodies Jesus promised us. Trust me, as you get older this becomes even more of a blessing.

Lets, pray...