

Luke 24:13-35 Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, part 1

Two men, or perhaps a man and his wife, were walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to a small town called Emmaus. These two individuals were disappointed and depressed. They had trusted that Jesus was the Messiah, the one who would redeem Israel. Just a few days before this, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, it seemed as if the people were ready to install Jesus as their king. But then everything fell apart. The Jewish authorities arrested Jesus and convinced the Roman rulers to crucify him. Jesus' shameful death on a cross seemed to invalidate everything that Jesus claimed for himself. How could he be the true Messiah if he died on the cross?

Added to that, there had been reports of a resurrection. Some of Jesus' followers had claimed that they had visited the tomb and found it empty. These two weary travelers didn't know what to make of these events.

As they were discussing these things, a stranger approached and joined their conversation. But this was not really a stranger; it was Jesus himself, appearing to two of his followers without them recognizing him. His intent is not only to appear to them, but also to teach them—and us—some very important truths.

The Gospels record at least 10 post-resurrection appearances of Christ to his disciples. Luke records three of these, and today we'll look at one of them—Jesus appearance to two of his followers as they were walking home from Jerusalem.

The intent of this passage is that we should believe that Jesus rose from the dead and that the Scriptures foretold that the Messiah would suffer before entering his glory. What happened to Jesus was all part of the divine plan. It all makes sense when you understand the Scriptures. There's an emphasis here on the need to read and understand the Bible. There is no excuse for failure to know and believe what the Bible teaches.

Let's consider *several truths* that we find revealed in this passage. This is a rather long passage, so I've divided it up into two messages.

I. Jesus has risen from the dead. .13-27

The first and most important thing this text tells us is that Jesus is alive. He had risen from the dead and he wants his disciples to know that.

A. .13 He appears to these two people.

1. These two are followers of Jesus, but not part of the original 12 disciples. In addition to the 12, there were many others who followed Jesus.

2. “two of them”

- a) We might assume that these are two men, but the text doesn't say that. One of them is named Cleopas (vs. 18), but the other is unnamed. So it could very well be Cleopas and his wife.

Cleopas is a male name; it's a shortened form of Cleopatus; the feminine form of that is Cleopatra.

- b) It's also significant that there are *two* people. The OT says that two witnesses are required to provide legal evidence. So these are two witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

And the Scriptures tell us that the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection were very important. The fact of Jesus' resurrection rests on eye-witness testimony. These two witnesses add their experience to the others who testify that Jesus rose from the dead.

The resurrection is not mythology or legend. It is a well-attested fact of history.

3. .13 “that same day” – This is still resurrection Sunday. It's later in the day, but it's still the same day Jesus rose from the dead.

- a) By this time, the women had been to the tomb and had found it empty. They had reported that fact to the disciples, but most of them disregarded their report.
- b) Peter and John had run to the tomb to see for themselves if it were empty, and they found it just as the women had described it. So there are already several other witnesses to the resurrection.

4. .13b Emmaus is a town about 7 miles from Jerusalem. No one knows the identity of this town for certain. One commentator said it was northwest of Jerusalem, while another said it was southeast.

5. .15 The two are communing and reasoning, i.e., discussing the events of the last several days.

Quote: The scene in vv. 14–17 is of a persistent but rather baffled attempt to understand the meaning of this most momentous weekend in history.¹

6. .15b Jesus himself approached them and began to talk to them. He apparently walks up from behind them and engages with them in conversation.
7. Vs. 16 naturally raises a question: Why didn't these two recognize Jesus?
 - a) Jesus no doubt appeared very different from the last time they'd seen him. If these two had seen Jesus during his crucifixion, his appearance now was much different from his appearance then.
 - b) But more importantly, it says "their eyes were holden so they should not know him." The word "holden" (κρατέω) means "to be kept back, to be restrained." Visually, something prevented them from recognizing him.
 - (1) There are two other verses in Luke that talk about information being withheld/hidden from people:

Luke 9:45 *But they did not understand this saying, and it was **hidden from them so that they did not perceive it**; ...*

Luke 18:34 *But they understood none of these things; **this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.***
 - (2) Who is doing the restraining here? Who is the agent hiding this information? The only one who could be restraining their understanding is God. For his own reasons and purposes, God determined that it would be best for these two not to recognize Jesus at this point.

¹ Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 1051.

Quotes: This lack of recognition allowed Jesus to teach the necessity of his death and resurrection and to show how this was the fulfillment of Scripture (Luke 24:25–27).²

He has closed [their] eyes to the truth because He has a deeper lesson to teach [them] later.³

God temporarily withheld information from a specific people for a specific reason.

App: Today, in the church age, God is in the business of opening eyes, not restricting people from understanding. Part of the ministry of the HSp is that he helps us to understand and apply biblical truth. We ought to be seeking truth and asking God to open our eyes.

But for whatever reason, at this point, God restrained their knowledge.

B. He enters into conversation with them.

1. .17 Jesus notices that they are sad (σκυθρωποί)—gloomy, sullen. They had heard the report from the women (cf. vss. 22-25), but, like the other disciples, they did not believe as of yet that Jesus had risen from the dead.

App: We would be sad if we believed that Jesus had not risen from the dead. As Paul says, we would be “of all people most miserable.” The resurrection validates all that Jesus had taught. Without the resurrection, Christianity would be a fraud; it would not even exist. The resurrection of Jesus is a fundamental, primary teaching of Christianity; you can’t be saved without believing it.

² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 610.

³ Steven J. Cole, “Lesson 114: Disappointment and Hope (Luke 24:13–35),” in *Luke*, Steven J. Cole Commentary Series (Dallas: Galaxie Software, 2017), Lk 24:13–35.

One of the reasons we know that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead is the great change in the disciples. They were all sad and sullen after the crucifixion. Their hopes had come crashing to the ground. They had good reason to be sad. It was the resurrection that changed everything for the disciples, as we shall see.

2. .18 This fellow traveler appears to be the only person in the region who has not heard about the events surrounding Jesus' death. Only a hermit who has no interaction with anyone else would not have heard about these events.

That statement seems to suggest that everyone in that area knew about Jesus and his crucifixion. It was a well-known event, and people had been talking about it. This traveler must be the only one who hadn't heard.

3. .19 Jesus asks them about the things they'd been discussing. As they explain themselves, Cleopas describes what they believed about Jesus.

- a) .19b He was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people. I.e., he was a genuine prophet, sent by God and approved by the people.

*Luke 7:16 Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A **great prophet has risen up among us**"; and, "God has visited His people."*

Of course, Jesus is much more than a prophet; he's also high priest and king. Cleopas was not saying everything he knew about Jesus. It's true that Jesus was a prophet.

- b) .20 The chief priests and rulers conspired together to condemn and crucify him.

Where did Cleopas lay the blame for Jesus' death? On the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. The Romans would not have done anything to Jesus had the Jewish religious leaders not compelled them to do so. Even though the Romans carried out the execution, the Jews were primarily responsible—they "have crucified him."

And remember that the Jewish leaders took this blame upon themselves—"His blood be upon us and on our children" (Mt 27:25).

Acts 2:23 [Jesus], being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

We know that ultimately, Jesus laid down his life as a voluntary sacrifice. It was God's plan for Jesus to suffer crucifixion. Yet the human responsibility lies with the Jews.

- c) .21 They had trusted that Jesus would have “redeemed Israel.”
- (1) Here's why the two were sad. We get a sense here of the disciples' deep disappointment. They had placed great hope in Jesus, and it appeared as if he failed to fulfill his promises.
 - (2) .21 The word “trusted” is usually translated as “hoped” (ἐλπίζω). They “were hoping,” i.e., they had been hoping. But their hope is fading. This was now the third day since Jesus' death, and they were losing hope.
 - (3) .21 What they were hoping for was that Jesus would have been the redeemer of Israel.
 - (a) A redeemer is one who pays a ransom price to release a prisoner.
 - (b) To redeem Israel would mean to set her free from bondage. That's what everyone expected of the Messiah.
 - (c) The Messiah would come and free Israel from bondage under the Roman Empire. The Messiah would establish a kingdom with Israel as the head of the nations. They would be free from domination of their enemies. That's what the disciples were hoping/trusting that Jesus would do.

- (d) And that's what Jesus actually did on the cross—he redeemed his people. He paid a ransom price to set us free, not from political domination, but from the domination of sin and death.

Revelation 5:9 ... *thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

- (e) And we also know that at some point, “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom 11:26). Jesus will redeem Israel.

(4) .21end Cleopas also mentions that it was the third day since all this had happened. It seems like it's now too late for their hopes to be fulfilled.

- d) .22-24 They had heard the report that the women had given the disciples regarding the empty tomb and the appearance of the angels. They had heard that report, but they didn't know what to make of it. The tomb was empty, but they didn't as of yet know what happened to Jesus' body. So there was a lot of uncertainty about Jesus.

Trans: Cleopas and his companion were confused and disheartened, not knowing what to make of these things.

As readers of the book of Luke, we already know how to understand these things. We are not confused or disheartened; quite the opposite. We know what these two did not know at the time—Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, and it was he who was speaking to them. That's the first and most important truth that we find in this text—Jesus has risen from the dead.

That truth is also a necessary part of the Gospel message—Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. He promises to redeem from sin to all those who repent and trust in him.

Jesus is about to explain what these two travelers don't understand. He's about to turn their sorrow into joy. He's about to teach them an amazing Bible lesson. But we'll have to wait for next time for that.