

The Resurrection and Post-Resurrection Narratives

Chapter 7: Jesus' Appearance on the Road to Emmaus

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And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And he said unto them, "What things?" And they said unto him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not." Then he said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread (Lk. 13-35; cf. Mk. 16:12-13).

The story of Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is briefly noted by Mark (16:12-13) and is discussed in detail in Luke's gospel. This story is one of the longest and most fascinating accounts of a post-resurrection encounter between Christ and His disciples. It is the first resurrection encounter between Christ and his disciples. It is the first resurrection appearance noted by Luke and is introduced with the word "lo" or "behold" because the events recorded are astonishing and noteworthy. The main purpose of this story is not to establish the reality of the resurrection. The narrative of the empty tomb has already proved it (Lk. 24:1-10). Here Luke's central purpose is to show Christ's rebuke (with His careful argumentation) to the disciples for their lack of faith and understanding. This story would be

very precious to the first saints because these two disciples are in their lack of faith representative of virtually all the disciples at that time.

Preliminary Comments

The story begins with two disciples on the way to a village called Emmaus. Nothing is known about these disciples except that they belonged to the wider circle of disciples that followed the Savior and one of them is named Cleopas (v. 18). “There is something very moving in one of the Lord’s few appearances being given to the humble, quite unknown disciples.”¹ From these men’s discussion of recent events with Christ, it is quite clear that the disciples who followed Jesus were a close knit group. On the very same day the resurrection occurred (note, “that same day” in 24:13), these men were already well aware of the report from the women who saw the empty tomb (cf. 24:22-24).

These men were either on their way home or to a place which they were renting in order to attend the Passover festivities. “It is possible that some of those who were crammed into (greater-) Jerusalem to meet the Passover requirement that they reside there for Passover moved away from the crowding for the remaining days of Unleavened Bread.”² The exact whereabouts of Emmaus is difficult to ascertain in that there were at least three towns with the name Emmaus outside of Jerusalem. The distance of “three score furlongs” or “sixty stadia” narrows it down to two towns. (A stadion is 607 feet. Therefore, 60 stadia are about 7 miles in distance.) The town which the crusaders identified as Emmaus is 7.1 miles from Jerusalem. Another possibility (if by 7 miles from Jerusalem Luke is referring to a round trip) is the Emmaus identified by Josephus (*War* 7:215) which is 30 stadia or around 3.5 miles from the holy city. This small village is mentioned not because there was anything noteworthy about it, but because Luke wants to emphasize the historicity of the narrative. Luke, who is aware that he is recording very important redemptive history, wants to emphasize the reality of these marvelous events.

As these men were walking home they were talking to each other about “all the things which happened.” It is a very common thing for persons walking together or riding together on a road to speak of the news of recent events especially when recent events were shocking and extraordinary. The “all these things” obviously included at a minimum: the trial, crucifixion, miraculous phenomena and the reports of the empty tomb. This assertion is proved by Cleopas’ comments to Jesus in verses 19-24.

These men, being disciples, had a personal stake in these events and were perplexed and sad because of them. Therefore, they sought out answers and relief by speaking to each other about Christ and these things. The verb used in verses 14 and 15 translated “talked” and “communed” is *homileo*, “from which we get ‘homiletics,’ is found only here and in Acts 20:11; 24:16. It comes from *holilos*, ‘crowd.’ So it first meant, ‘be in company with’ and then, ‘converse with.’”³ Now that these men were away from the city where there were many enemies of the Savior, they could speak freely about the things of Christ. They were expositing and reasoning among themselves as to recent events and were probably particularly interested in the testimony they had heard only very recently about the angels and the empty tomb.

Their faith and understanding at this time was weak, but they at least were still focusing on Christ and attempting to come to some understanding of recent events. The subject of their

¹ Leon Morris, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, 88), 367.

² John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 1201.

³ Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1974), 79.

conversation indicated their reverence for the Master and their godliness even though their ignorance and lack of faith in the resurrection was worthy of reproof. These men had no doubt heard from Jesus that His resurrection would take place and had even heard the report of the women and yet they were still bewildered.

From the subject of their conversation we should learn that speaking to each other about Christ and His work is the wise thing to do when we are sad and perplexed. As Solomon says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Pr. 27:17). Spiritual conversation between Christians is an important means of sanctification. Paul said we should “exhort one another” (Heb. 10:25); speak “what is good for necessary edification” (Eph. 4:29); and “comfort one another” (1 Th. 5:11). Malachi’s words on this topic are noteworthy: “Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. ‘They shall be Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him’” (3:16-17). Let us stop wasting so much time talking to each other about frivolous matters and learn to talk more and more about the things of Christ. “Let us speak of Jesus, when we are sitting in our houses and we are walking by the way, whenever we can find a disciple to speak to (Deut. vi. 7).”⁴ “Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are together, to talk of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another’s knowledge, refresh one another’s memory, and stir up one another’s devout affections.”⁵

As these men were talking, Jesus approached and joined Himself to them. Luke says that, “their eyes were restrained; so that they did not know Him” (24:16). Mark’s account says that He appeared to them in another form (16:12). Our Lord kept these disciples from recognizing Him; so to them He was only a friendly stranger. The Savior purposely did not allow these disciples to recognize Him so that He could question them and reason with them out of the Scriptures and first bring them to a biblical faith and understanding through the Word. It is informative that Christ, even though personally present, expected these disciples to find Him first in their Bibles.

Once Jesus had joined Himself to these men on their journey, His ministering to them began. As we study Luke’s account there are four things that we need to consider: (1) the Savior’s questions to these men; (2) the disciples’ deficient answer; (3) the Lord’s rebuke for their unbelief and the remedy for it; and (4) Christ’s fellowship with these disciples and His revealing Himself to them.

The Savior’s Questions

After our Lord caught up to the two disciples He questioned them. “He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad’ (24:17)? Christ’s question implies that it was asked after He had followed them for some time, close enough to listen to their conversation; or, that after He came up alongside of them they continued their discussion in His presence. This question was kind and compassionate, for clearly these men were looking depressed or glum. “The adjective *skythropos* (only here and Matt. 6:16) means ‘looking sad’ (NASB) or with ‘faces downcast’ (NIV).”⁶ “[W]hat melancholy

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1858] 1998), 2:499.

⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:835.

⁶ Ralph Earle, *Word Meaning in the New Testament*, 79-80.

story are you telling to one another, which causes such sadness of countenance, and dejection of mind?”⁷

The response to our Lord’s question is one of incredulity because these men are astonished that this Stranger does not know about these recent events. “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?’” (24:18). This counter question assumed that only a complete stranger or visitor from outside the area could have remained in the dark about the events which were the talk of the town. Cleopas’ response tells us that all the events concerning Jesus were well known among the people. The redemptive work of Christ was a very public affair. “The whole verse is an important evidence of the publicity and notoriety of our Lord Jesus Christ’s crucifixion.”⁸

At this point Jesus still pretends ignorance and asks a question to draw out of them more particular information. “He said to them, ‘What things?’” (24:19). There are a number of things that we need to note regarding our Lord’s questions.

First, they reveal the Savior’s compassion for His people. “Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions.”⁹ Christ notes that the root cause of their sadness is their lack of understanding and faith and sets about to help them in the most effective manner possible. Although these disciples were having difficulties in comprehending recent events and had not yet embraced the resurrection; nevertheless, they loved the Savior and had true faith within them. They were not obstinate and ungodly men, but were true disciples who had a holy desire to understand the truth and please God. Consequently, the resurrected Redeemer stretches out His hand to them so that the feeble faith within them would grow and embrace the gospel in all its fullness and detail. We can rest assured that what God has begun in us, He will bring to completion. “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

In modern evangelical churches which embrace Arminianism or semi-Pelagianism, people are taught that they, of their own free, unencumbered will, must find Christ. But, in this passage, Jesus seeks out His own, finds them and then ministers to them. The resurrected Lord is not passively waiting for sinners to come to Him; but, is actively seeking out His own sheep. He does exactly what is necessary to remove their unbelief and perfect their faith in Him. The Mediator is very active and involved in bringing His people, the elect, to a full faith in His person and work. What a blessed Savior!

When we see our brothers in Christ experiencing sorrow or sadness we should imitate our Lord and go to them with counsel and comfort from the Scriptures. The church should be as an oasis of comfort and peace from this wicked, dark, uncaring world. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

Second, these questions show us the Redeemer’s perfect wisdom in helping troubled Christians. Jesus could have revealed Himself at once, but He instead hid Himself and asked probing questions to examine where these disciples were theologically, spiritually and emotionally. In order to help people in distress, we must gently ask probing questions and then listen carefully to what is troubling them. Christ began by asking a general question and then

⁷ John Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament* (Streamwood, IL: Primitive Baptist Library, [1809] 1979), 1:728.

⁸ Alfred Nevin, *Popular Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia: William Flint, 1868), 684.

⁹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:836.

follow it up with something more specific. To simply offer people advice without carefully examining where they are at is like working on a car without first finding out what is wrong with it. “He did not at once begin by saying, ‘I know why you are sad.’ No; he waited for them to speak, and in his patience drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn hence the way of wisdom. Do not talk too much yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. . . . It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy hath an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties: do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them, and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer.”¹⁰

Our Lord asked these questions not simply so that He could identify the disciples’ problems, but also so that the disciples themselves would better benefit from His rebuke and teaching. Often Christians have problems and are depressed without knowing exactly why. Jesus draws out an answer so that their foolishness in not believing in the resurrection is brought into plain sight. We must remember that Christ as God already knows the disciples’ deficiencies in exhaustive detail. But these disciples need to know clearly where they are at, so that the Savior can show them where they ought to be.

The Disciples’ Deficient Answer

The disciples answer Jesus assuming that He had a complete lack of knowledge of recent events. Their answer has two primary elements. They first give a brief history of the important events; then, they explain why they are disappointed and sullen. “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, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him’” (Lk. 24:19-20).

In this brief history of events they identify who Jesus is and what occurred to Him. The expression “Jesus of Nazareth” separates Him from the many other Jewish men of that time who had the name Jesus (i.e. Joshua). “There was, for example, ‘Jesus Barabbas’ (according to a Matt. 27:16 reading), ‘Jesus the son of Sirach,’ etc. In certain ethnic communities today not a few boys are called Jesus.”¹¹

The expression, “a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” indicates that this Nazarene was a messenger sent from God (see Dt. 18:15, 18; Lk. 7:16; Jn. 4:19, 44; 9:17; Ac. 3:22; 7:37). He was not an ordinary, average prophet, but was *mighty* before God and all the people. Jesus was attested as a genuine prophet by the amazing public signs that He did before God and the nation (see Ac. 2:22; Jn. 12:17). Although these disciples have not described our Lord as the Messiah—the Son of God, nevertheless they exhibit an unbroken faith that He was genuine. They clearly did not accept the Sanhedrinists’ propaganda that He was a deceiver. In their statement, they show honor and respect to the Savior.

This great prophet, however, suffered a terrible end to His career: “and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him” (Lk. 24:20). These disciples place the responsibility for Jesus’ death squarely upon the Jewish leaders. They even speak as if the Sanhedrinists themselves crucified Christ because ultimately they held the chief responsibility. These Jewish disciples were not speaking in an anti-Semitic way as many

¹⁰ Charles H. Spurgeon, “Folly of Unbelief” in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1888] 1969), 33:481-481.

¹¹ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 1061.

modern Jews suppose. They are simply relating an historical fact. “The disciples were not afraid to declare that in respect to Jesus, an irreconcilable difference of opinion existed between them and the chiefs of the people.”¹²

As Cleopas continues, the deficiencies of their faith were revealed. “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” (Lk. 24:21). The disciples expressed disappointment that things relating to Jesus did not turn out as they had expected. When Cleopas says “we,” he may be speaking for all the followers of Christ. These two disciples’ attitude at this time was representative of virtually all the disciples. The verb used “we were hoping” (the imperfect) indicates that they had been hoping or trusting for quite some time. They believed that the Nazarene was going to redeem Israel. The word “redeem” has the basic meaning of “deliverance through the payment of a ransom.” In Christian theology, it refers to the payment of the debt of the guilt of our sins by the bloody, sacrificial death of Christ. Given the lack of understanding of these two disciples and the apostles at this time, it is unlikely their theology was this detailed or advanced. Given what we know of the disciples’ expectations of the coming of the Savior’s kingdom in the gospels, it is likely that Cleopas and his companion believed that our Lord in some manner was going to deliver Israel from the oppression of Rome and the corruption of its leaders. The nation’s deep spiritual and political problems would be forever resolved. “They expected, indeed, the promised Deliverance at His hand; but certainly not by His death.”¹³ Obviously, if they understood the full implications and meaning of Christ’s death they would not have been disappointed and sad.

In addition to their not understanding that Jesus’ death on the cross had accomplished the redemption in Israel, they then revealed their doubts regarding our Lord’s resurrection. “Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 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” (Lk. 24:21-24).

These disciples knew about our Lord’s predictions regarding the third day; had heard the women’s report made earlier that morning; and, were even aware of Peter and John’s examination of the empty tomb. Indeed, verses 22-23 “give a short summary of 24:1-12. The summary includes the empty tomb (24:3), the angelic appearance (24:4), and the message that Jesus was alive (24:5; cf. Acts 3:15).”¹⁴ Their statement, “but Him they did not see” (24:24), indicates that the women’s testimony, the grave clothes and the empty tomb were not enough to convince Cleopas and his companion of the resurrection.

It appears that these two disciples believed that if Christ had truly risen, then He would make Himself public and immediately vindicate Himself by exhibiting His person in outward pomp and glory. But, thus far everything had been quite secret, except the report of the women; and, the gospels repeatedly tell us that the women’s report was not believed (e.g., see Mk. 16:11; Lk. 24:11).

While these men do not yet believe in the resurrection, they have not completely ruled it out either. They are perplexed and sad and are not sure what to make of all these events. It

¹² Alfred Nevin, *Popular Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke*, 685.

¹³ David Brown, *The Four Gospels: A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1864] 1969), 341.

¹⁴ Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 611.

appears that these men were hesitating between faith and fear and thus were thinking about recent events in order to nourish their faith and drive away their doubts. The problem was that their presuppositions regarding the immediate earthly glory of the Messianic kingdom were keeping them from embracing the women's testimony and accepting the reality of the resurrection. These poor, weak, doubting disciples needed the Savior to help them and that is precisely what He does.

The Lord's Rebuke and Remedy

After having drawn out what was on the hearts of these disciples, our Lord does two things for the benefit of these erring believers. First, He rebukes them. Then, He explains why they are wrong.

Although unrecognized, Christ speaks to these men with authority. "Then He said to them, '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 His glory?'" (Lk. 24:26). First, let us note the following things regarding our Lord's rebuke.

(1) Note that this was a strong rebuke. These men are called "foolish" for failing to believe that the Messiah had to suffer and be crucified before He could enter into His glory. Jesus said that unbelief is foolishness because God has so clearly spoken regarding these redemptive events in Scripture. The Bible teaches that the Messiah would be despised by the people and rejected by men (Ps. 22:6; Is. 53:3); oppressed and afflicted (Is. 53:7); convicted and taken from prison (Is. 53:8). His hands and His feet would be pierced (Ps. 22:16). He would be surrounded by Gentiles and His wicked enemies as He suffered (Ps. 22:16). Finally, He would be killed and buried in a rich man's grave (Is. 53:8-9). If these disciples had studied the many Messianic prophecies, they would have understood what had been happening in recent days and spared themselves a lot of grief, perplexities and doubt. "Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that he calls them foolish; it is about this that he chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty."¹⁵

(2) This rebuke included the slowness of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken. The disciples had accepted many things in the prophets regarding the Messiah. They, like their contemporaries, were very fond of the passages which spoke of the Messiah's victory

¹⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, "Folly of Unbelief," 33:482. Calvin's comments on this passage are excellent: "This reproof appears to be too harsh and severe for a weak man such as this was; but whoever attends to all the circumstances will have no difficulty in perceiving that our Lord had good reason for rebuking so sharply those on whom he had long bestowed labour to little purpose, and almost without any fruit. For it ought to be observed, that what is here said was not confined to these two persons, but, as a reproof of a common fault, was intended to be conveyed by their lips to the rest of their companions. So frequently had Christ forewarned them of his death—so frequently had he even discoursed about a new and spiritual life, and confirmed his doctrine by the inspired statements of the prophets—that he would seem to have spoken to the deaf, or rather to blocks and stones; for they are struck with such horror at his death, that they know not to what hand to turn. This hesitation, therefore, he justly attributes to folly, and assigns as the reason of it their carelessness in not having been more ready to believe. Nor does he only reprove them because, while they had the best Teacher, they were dull and slow to learn, but because they had not attended to the instructions of the Prophets; as if he had said, that their insensibility admitted of no excuse, because it was owing to themselves alone, since the doctrine of the Prophets was abundantly clear, and had been fully expounded to them (*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, 3:358).

and glory. But, they did not believe everything regarding the Christ that was in the prophets. They did not embrace the Old Testament concept of the suffering Servant. When it came to the Messianic prophecies regarding Jesus' humiliation and death there was a dullness, blindness and reluctance to believe them. The Savior rebukes all those who do not immediately embrace all that the Bible teaches. He does not accept any excuses for a lack of trust in all of the Scriptures. It is likely that these men had been wrongly instructed regarding some of these things from their youth. For the Mediator, that is no excuse. A heart or mind that is slow to embrace any truth of Scripture is worthy of a sharp rebuke from the lips of Jesus.

In our day, professing Christians treat the Scriptures like a theological smorgasbord, picking doctrines they like while ignoring or disregarding the rest. The Mediator says that such behavior is totally unacceptable. Because these disciples had not embraced everything the Bible said, they were confused, downcast and had a defective faith. They were living inconsistently with their own profession. They professed faith in the prophets, but they did not trust everything that the prophets said. Virtually all professing Christians will say, "I believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God." But many act as though they really do not believe their own profession. When it comes to many biblical teachings, they simply do not want to know what the Bible says or do not care what it says. They have more of a seeming faith than a real faith. The test of whether a person's faith is counterfeit or merely weak and defective is if, when clearly presented with the truth, they repent or reject it. The two disciples in our story repented when confronted with the truth, but tragically many professing Christians will *obstinately* and *repeatedly* continue to reject it. Such people have no reason to believe that they are truly saved before God. Remember, these disciples were slow to believe everything, but they did eventually believe it. It is one thing to be slow to trust, which is bad and worthy of rebuke; and, quite another never to believe, which is fatal and damnable. The latter group never had true faith in their hearts to begin with.

(3) Note that our Lord focuses His attention upon the Scriptures. Although He could have rebuked them for failing to believe the women's testimony of the empty tomb and angelic announcement, He rather focuses on the prophets. For Jesus, the testimony of Scripture is more important than even eyewitness testimony. This view is supported in 2 Peter 1:19-21: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (KJV). Peter says that the written word of God is more sure than even being an eyewitness of a miraculous event. Nisbet writes, "He calls it *a more sure Word*, comparing it with *the voice from Heaven*, but because it is a greater matter to have foreseen and foretold things to come, than to have seen and related the greatest things present. And because a transient voice is more easily mistaken or forgotten than a standing authentic record, therefore the written word is a more sure ground for sinners' faith to rest than a voice from heaven could be."¹⁶

The implications of this profound truth are very important. Believers who, in their apologetic methodology, pretend the Bible doesn't exist in reaching out to unbelievers are setting aside their most potent weapon against unbelief. We must strive to have the great respect and trust in the Bible as the Word of God that Jesus had. We must always remember that although atheists, secular humanists and so-called progressive thinkers are fond of referring to Bible-believing Christians as fools and idiots, Christ Himself taught exactly the opposite. People who

¹⁶ Alexander Nisbet, *1 and 2 Peter* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1658] 1982), 239.

are slow to believe everything that the Scriptures teach are foolish. Our Lord's statement ought to make us bold even in situations where we are ridiculed.

Second, after the rebuke our Lord immediately sets forth the remedy for the disciples' doubts, perplexity and sadness. "'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" (Lk. 24:26-27). There are a number of noteworthy things in this passage.

(1) The primary reason for the rebuke is stated; which is the divine necessity of the Savior's suffering on the cross. This teaching is stated in the form of a question that demands an affirmative answer. It implies that the disciples should have known the answer to this question. Although it was necessary for Christ to suffer to fulfill the decree of God, to fulfill the many prophecies and to satisfy God's justice, Jesus will focus on the cross as the fulfillment of Scripture. "[T]he imperfect *edei* expresses the necessity that is involved in prophecy, a necessity that reaches back to the very first prophecy that was uttered about the Messiah and continues through the centuries until now.... No divine prophecy can possibly fail."¹⁷ These disciples should have learned from their Bibles that our Lord had to suffer and die in order to be the Savior. Christ tells them that, in God's plan, humiliation and suffering must precede the glory of the resurrection, ascension and the kingdom of grace. The Redeemer is telling these men that their sorrow and perplexity is totally unwarranted because His death was the focal point of Scripture and the most important act in redemption. If He did not die, there would be no kingdom, no glory and no paradise restored.

(2) Luke says that Jesus carefully answered His own question by expounding the Scriptures. The expression "Moses and all the prophets" is likely synonymous with "all the Scriptures" in the same verse. Christ was the seed of woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). His sacrificial death was the antitype of all the Old Testament sacrifices. Jesus was the prophet to come who was greater than Moses (see Dt. 18:15-19). He was the fulfillment of the Davidic kingship and the antitype of all the judges and deliverers of Israel. Our Lord was the true Lamb, the true high priest, the true temple, the true scapegoat, the true seed who would bless all nations. He was Isaiah's suffering servant whose death would redeem Israel (Is. 53:5, 8). He was Daniel's Messiah the Prince who would be cut off for the people (9:26) and bring an end to the Old Covenant sacrifices (9:27). "He was Jeremiah's 'Branch of Righteousness, executing justice and righteousness in the land.' He was Ezekiel's 'Plant of renown,' giving shade and giving fragrance. He was Daniel's stone cut without hands, smiting the image, becoming a mountain and filling the whole earth."¹⁸ "Let it be a settled principle in our minds, in reading the Bible, that Christ is the central sum of the whole book. So long as we keep Him in view, we shall never greatly err, in our search for spiritual knowledge. Once losing sight of Christ, we shall find the whole Bible dark and full of difficulty. The key of Bible knowledge is Jesus Christ."¹⁹

(3) By way of application, note that our Lord is essentially giving these disciples a lesson in biblical interpretation or hermeneutics. The central reason that these disciples and the apostles did not understand the crucifixion was not a lack of knowledge of what the Bible said, but rather a failure to interpret the Scripture correctly. In order to understand the central teaching of the Old Testament, one must have a particular hermeneutical approach. With the death and resurrection

¹⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, 1188.

¹⁸ G. Cambell Morgan, *The God Who Cares* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, [1931] 1987), 407.

¹⁹ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, 2:501.

of the Lord Himself already accomplished, Jesus can survey the Old Testament and expound certain texts so these disciples can now truly understand the teaching of the Old Testament.

From this, we should learn that the Old Testament cannot be fully understood without the help of the New Testament. “The mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known into men, was revealed unto the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Eph. iii.5), and that revelation sheds a flood of light upon numerous portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. On the other hand, it is equally true that a scientific interpretation of the New Testament is impossible without a thorough knowledge of the older Scriptures.... The Old Testament also abounds in the testimony of Christ (Luke xxiv. 27, 44; John v. 39; Acts x. 43), the illustration and fulfillment of which can only be seen in the light of Christian revelation.”²⁰ Our approach to the Old Testament must be the approach of Christ. The false exegesis of the Jewish rabbis, which is mired in human traditions and perversions, cannot lead a person to see the beauty of the Savior or to embrace Him by faith.

Christ’s Fellowship with These Disciples

As Jesus and these disciples drew near their village our Lord indicated that He was going to continue. “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. 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. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight” (Lk. 24:29-31).

After traveling with Christ and listening to Him teach for quite some time, these travelers do not want to let this Stranger go. Although the time of day and Middle Eastern hospitality played a role in their insistence on offering food and overnight hospitality (cf. Gen. 19:2-3; Jg. 19:19; “In the ancient world, hospitality to strangers ranked high as a religious virtue.”²¹), no doubt it was the Stranger’s presence and teaching that was their main motivation. This is evident from verse 32: “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

When they sat down to eat with this stranger, something very strange and unusual occurred. The Stranger did not act as the guest, but as the host, the head of the household. He prayed over the meal and distributed to the two disciples who reclined with Him. These two men had been our Lord’s pupils on the way to Emmaus and now they assumed the position of disciples to the Master.

Commentators who see in this the celebration of the Lord’s supper are mistaken and are reading too much into the passage. There are no words of consecration, no wine is mentioned. There are no words of explanation and the Savior disappeared during the meal. The supper began but it never ended. In fact, it appears that our Lord disappeared before the unleavened bread was even consumed. We need to be careful not to interpret all passages which refer to eating as signifying the Lord’s supper. Sacramentalists in their desire to exalt the holy supper have been too eager to find the sacraments where they do not belong.

What is significant about this passage is the time in which the Mediator revealed Himself to these disciples. After the fellowship of the meal begins Jesus miraculously opened their eyes and immediately they knew it was Christ. “The verb ‘were opened’ is a divine passive much like

²⁰ Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 18.

²¹ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1205.

‘were kept from recognizing him’ in 24:16...”²² It is a mistake to attempt to explain this recognition in some sort of natural manner such as they recognized His voice or saw the scars on His hands when He broke the bread. They recognized Him only when He caused them to know Him.

From the order and the way the resurrected Savior caused these events to unfold there are certain things that can be applied from this passage. (1) It is clear that Jesus wanted His disciples to come to faith in His death and resurrection not solely by sight, but first through faith and understanding in God’s holy Word. He opened His Word to them and expounded it before He made Himself known to them. Blessed are those who believe without first having to see (Jn. 20:29). This point is especially relevant today when our Lord’s post-resurrection appearances have ceased and we are dependent upon the completed canon of Scripture alone.

(2) The Redeemer first brings us to Himself through the gospel before He fellowships with us as part of His family. No one can have a saving relationship to Christ who does not first embrace the teaching of the Word of God concerning the Messiah. Those who are ignorant of God’s Word and do not embrace the Mediator will remain outside the heavenly Jerusalem. “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21:27).

(3) Jesus has the power to open the eyes of the mind so that people will see Him as He truly is. The Mediator who sits in glory at the right hand of God sends His Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people to give them spiritual insight and enlightenment. If our Lord did not open our hearts by His power and give us faith and understanding, none of us would embrace the gospel. Salvation from start to finish is a work of Christ. He did not save us because we saw and believed of our own power. On the contrary, He enabled us to see in the new birth and drew us to Himself by His own sovereign power. Salvation is of the LORD (Jon. 2:9).

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²² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, 613.