

## **66. Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

Luke 24:36-53

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

It was Sunday evening, the day of the resurrection of Christ. The weekend had been full of tears, depression, arguing, and controversy. During this dark and confusing time, some unusual things began to happen. It had started that Sunday morning with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, claiming that they had gone to Jesus' tomb and reporting to them that Christ was alive and risen from the grave (Luke 24:4-10). Matthew also records the scene at the tomb and that an angel appeared to the women, telling them that Christ was risen and would be going ahead of them into Galilee and that He would see them there. They were told to report this news to the others (Matthew 28:7). As they went to tell the good news to the disciples, Matthew proceeded to write that Jesus appeared to the women and briefly talked to them. In sheer delight, they had fallen at His feet and grasping hold of Him, not wanting to ever let Him go again.

When the testimony of the women came to the disciples, the news was met with skepticism, and some even thought it was nonsense (Luke 24:11), for who had ever conquered death? John and Peter ran to the tomb, but they did not see Jesus; however, they found the burial strips of linen lying in such a way as to convince John that something supernatural had occurred. When they returned to the room where they were hiding from the Romans and Jewish leaders, the eleven disciples and others with them were in a state of confusion.

We call this state of mind cognitive dissonance, i.e. a frame of mind so overwhelming that everything they believed was being challenged. How could it be possible for Jesus to be alive when they had so clearly seen Him die? As the day wore on, the doubts had started to creep in again. They began to question the things they had seen and experienced. They were suffering from the trauma of the recent events. Discouragement and hope battled for position in their minds as they continued to recall events and conversations, remembering things that Jesus had told them in the past. As I try to put myself in their position, I imagine that they were afraid to believe. Their hopes for the kingdom they expected Jesus to usher in were gone, and now He was gone. Could something so wonderful be true: could He really be alive?

Two of the disciples, Cleopas and his friend, had left discouraged and had begun their walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). They concluded that what the women had seen was just a vision or, perhaps, wishful thinking. When Jesus walked up alongside them and asked them questions about what they understood concerning the events of that morning, they were shocked that this stranger did not know of the events in Jerusalem. When they told Jesus (Whom they did not recognize at this point) about the women's account, they said nothing about the women claiming to have seen or touched Jesus. Instead, they said that the women had seen a "vision of angels." They may have concluded that the women's grief was causing them to imagine incredible things. This is how they had interpreted the amazing account the women had brought, not yet able to grasp the wonderful truth of what had happened. Jesus did not rebuke them for unbelief; instead, He just continued to walk along with them, listening to their conversation.

When the Lord revealed Himself to the two disciples at the breaking of bread, they could not remain in Emmaus even one night. Their faith now rested on the plan of God as revealed in

Scripture as Jesus unfolded truth from the Old Testament Scriptures. It was already dark when they determined to get back to Jerusalem and tell the eleven disciples of their encounter with Christ. They could not keep the good news to themselves. This is often a good indication of conversion, i.e. when one cannot keep the Good News to himself! Maturity in Christ is recognized by what people do with what has changed their lives.

We can only imagine what their joy must have been like as they hastened back to Jerusalem to share about their encounter with the Lord Jesus. It must have been late in the evening when they finally covered the seven miles uphill to the room where the disciples had gathered. They had to knock and whisper to the eleven and others inside to get in, for the door was “locked for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). When they burst into the room testifying to the fact of Jesus’ walking and talking with them, they found out that Peter had received a personal appearance of the Lord (Luke 24:34). How beautiful of the Lord to confront Peter on his own. We are told nothing of that conversation, and that is how it should be when a man is confronted with his failure. We can only imagine the wide eyes in the room as the two Emmaus believers shared their experience of talking with and seeing the risen Christ.

We are not told where the disciples were gathered that Sunday evening, but it is quite likely that it was the same upper room where they had eaten the Passover meal. It would have been a very poignant picture. The last time they had shared a meal together, Christ had told them that He would be taken from them and that He would be betrayed by one of them. They had shared the meal together, not really believing that it would be their last Passover meal and not wanting to believe the things that He had been saying. Then, there they were, discussing the possibility that He was alive again. Mark adds the fact that they were eating at the time (Mark 16:14). The news from Cleopas and his friend caused a stir in the room, and they were still discussing these things when Jesus Himself appeared before them in the room.

### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

<sup>36</sup>While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>37</sup>They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." <sup>40</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup>And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate it in their presence (Luke 24:36-42).

Question 1) If you had been a silent observer on that day and listening to the disciples talking, what doubts and fears do you imagine they were discussing? (v. 38). Why were they startled and frightened (v. 37) when the Lord appeared?

They were in the middle of discussing all the evidence when the Lord Jesus materialized in the center of the discussion. It must have been an alarming experience to have somebody appear in the middle of the room. It sounds like something out of *Star Trek* or some other sci-fi series! Their first thought was that He was a ghost, perhaps due to the way He arrived among them. One

of the first things He said to them was: “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?” (Verse 38). How did He know they were troubled and had doubts about His being raised from the dead? He was listening, of course! Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is, in the middle of them (Matthew 18:20). The Lord listens in to our conversations. He knows exactly where each of us is in our faith walk. He knows our needs even before we ask.

*Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? (Psalm 94:9).*

Although we cannot see Him, He sees and listens to all that we say and all that we do. Nothing escapes His attention. He knows the pain and heartache, which we may be experiencing right now. He knows our loneliness; He sees how we are being treated at work or at home. He never leaves us when we are having doubts and when questions arise in our hearts. Be honest with God. He listens not only to your every conversation but also to every thought.

*<sup>1</sup>O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD (Psalm 139:1-4).*

Just as He came among the disciples while they were having doubts, He longs to do the same for us. He is a good listener. He had listened to the testimony of the two Emmaus disciples even when they did not realize who He was.

*Question 2) When one considers all the evidence that the disciples had heard that day, why would they still doubt? Was it the lack of evidence? Was it a lack of faith? What causes people today to doubt the resurrection of Christ?*

Many people do not try to find answers to the doubts that they have. For some, it is not just doubts; it is unbelief, which rests more in the will than the mind. They make a conscious decision not to believe. Unbelief is a sin when it is a choice of the heart. The enemy is quick to sow doubtful thoughts and suggestions into the freshly tilled soil of our minds. We are presented with a choice as to whether we will listen to God’s Word or Satan’s doubts. If you have doubts, do not hesitate to examine and seek out the facts where the Gospel is concerned. There is evidence at every step for the Christian faith, but there is a point where one must cast themselves into the hand of God and choose to believe or reject the Gospel. Martin Luther said: “The art of doubting is easy, for it is an ability that is born with us.”<sup>1</sup>

God doesn’t have a problem with your doubts, but He does have a problem with willful unbelief that shuns the truth, refusing to reach a conclusion when presented with the evidence. Henry Drummond once said: “Christ distinguished between doubt and unbelief. Doubt says, ‘I can’t believe.’ Unbelief says, ‘I won’t believe.’ Doubt is honest. Unbelief is obstinate.”<sup>2</sup> If you lack evidence as to the faith, be sure that the Lord is near and ready to confirm you in your faith, if

<sup>1</sup> John Blanchard, *Gathered Gold*, Printed by Evangelical Press, Welwyn, Herts, England. 1984. Page 71.

<sup>2</sup> John Blanchard, *More Gathered Gold*, Printed by Evangelical Press, Welwyn, Herts, England. 1986. Page 79

you are willing. If, in the deepest place of your heart there is openness to the truth, the evidence will come if you seek Him with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

Jesus manifested Himself in their midst, and twice we are told that He showed them His hands and feet. I wish I could have seen their faces as He had them look on His wounds. Maybe, one day we will be able somehow to view it when we finally get home! Luke notes the joy and amazement on the faces of the disciples as they took in all the evidence of the visible, bodily presence of Christ (v. 41). It seemed too wonderful to be true!

I had a similar experience when I gave my life to Christ. I had been in a very dark place in my life, but the joy I found when I entrusted my life to Christ was so wonderful that I thought it had to be illegal. Hah! Something this good could not be true! They must have wondered if what they were seeing was too good to be true. They felt the nail prints as He held out His hands to them while going around the room.

Have you ever wondered why the scars remained in the hands of Jesus even though His body was totally healed and resurrected? The marks of love remain for all to see. With the food on the table in front of them, Jesus then ate a piece of fish while they watched.

**Question 3) Why does Luke make a point about Jesus asking for food? (Verse 41).**

The testimony of the two just returned from Emmaus was that Jesus disappeared just as He broke the bread. It is possible that one of those in the room asked the two if Jesus had eaten with them, concluding that Jesus had to be just a ghost because He did not eat. Now, He deliberately eats with them, just to prove that He was not a vision or a ghost. Jesus has a real body of flesh and blood, but one different in that it is incorruptible and able to move from place to place at will, i.e. moving through things of substance, such as walls and doors.

### **Understanding the Scriptures**

<sup>44</sup>He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

<sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:44-49)

Christ then opened their minds to the Scriptures (v. 45), reminding them that faith in God must be based on the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Just as you need food for your physical body, in the same way you need spiritual food, i.e. the Word of God, typified of the Manna that came every day to Israel in the forty-year wilderness journey (Exodus 16:4). Jesus reminded them of the things that He had taught them while He was with them—things that were prophesied in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms that had to be fulfilled by Christ. Just as He did with the Emmaus disciples, He did the same with those in the room, taking them through Old

Testament passages and explaining the plan of God to redeem not just Jewish people but Gentiles, too. The Plan of God for salvation was unfolding before their eyes, and they saw the reason for Jesus' suffering and voluntary sacrifice.

In His conversation with them, Luke now gives us the expectation of the Lord that is before every one that bears His Name:

<sup>46</sup>This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,  
<sup>47</sup>and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations,  
beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:46-48).

The task that is before all the Church is to preach repentance and forgiveness of sin to all nations beginning at Jerusalem, their home (Verse 47). The Lord's expectation is not for us to make conversions, but disciples. Matthew's Gospel makes His word clearer as to His command:

<sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20 Emphasis mine).

We are to teach all nations to obey everything that the Lord taught the disciples in the three years He walked with them. Luke gives us Christ's strategy in the Book of Acts. We are to teach and make disciples from ever-widening concentric circles from one's home town.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The strategy is to begin to share the Good News in your own home town. You need to be willing to start where you are! Often, this is the most difficult place to start. Even Christ himself was not accepted in His home town. If opportunities come to sow seed in fields more distant, then that precious seed of the Word of God must be sown. We are to be pragmatic with our resources and invest our lives to promote the Kingdom of God in all kinds of ways, bringing Christ a return on His investment. This is what He taught in the Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11-26).

Jesus gave them specific instructions about waiting. They were to learn dependency and faith from the very beginning of their mission. They were told to wait until they received the promise of the Father: "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The promise of the Father is the Holy Spirit Who would come and rest on them and be in them on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. The Resurrection of Christ came three days after Passover. I estimate that means that they had to wait another forty-seven days before they could go and preach the kingdom of God.

Question 4) Why did they have to wait forty-seven days until the Day of Pentecost? What was the purpose in waiting?

The period of waiting was crucial to their empowerment, i.e. their being clothed with the Spirit. Often, we seek to go in our own strength and do not wait for God's power and leading. A.B Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, has something to say about this passage from Luke concerning waiting until we are clothed or filled with the Spirit. He said: "These waiting days were necessary to enable the disciples to realize their need, their nothingness, their failure, and their dependence upon the Master. They had to get emptied first before they would get filled."

Luke wrote that Jesus appeared again and again to them over a period of forty days after His suffering:

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

What was He doing in those forty days? He was strengthening them in their faith and teaching them about the kingdom of God. We must be emptied of self and be right with God and others before we can be filled with the Spirit. When the Day of Pentecost came, they were completely ready and abandoned to God's work, experiencing great unity, and being in one accord with one another: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1 KJV). The Spirit filled or baptized them, dipping them into Himself, soaking and saturating them with His presence.

The time of waiting had created a thirst that could only be quenched by God the Holy Spirit Himself. They were in a place of dependence on the Spirit because Jesus had left them and ascended to the Father seven days before the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:3). The eleven disciples were not supermen. They were just like you and I. They needed God's Spirit to accomplish the task of taking the message to others. Dedication and dependence on God working through them by His Spirit enabled them to complete their mission. It is no different for us.

Question 5) In Acts 1:4, Luke recalls Jesus' saying, "Wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about." What do the words gift and promise communicate to you?

If the promised Holy Spirit is sent as a gift, why would we not want to receive Him and all that He wants to do in us and through us? Some doubt that God will give them the Holy Spirit. Why would God not give the One that He has promised? Does God ever hold back on His giving? "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things" (Romans 8:32). Of one thing I am sure: when God gives a gift with a promise, the least we should do is to receive what He wants to give! We receive Christ by faith, and when we do, the Spirit takes up residence in our lives. If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit: "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). If you are a believer and trusting fully in what Christ has accomplished for you,

you have the Holy Spirit. The most important thing is does the Holy Spirit have you? Have you fully abandoned your life to Christ? Does He have ownership of your life?

God can do more in five minutes through His Spirit working in you and through you than you can do by yourself, attempting to work things out in your own human strength and ability. We all have God-given abilities and natural strengths that God has placed within us. These gifts are to be used for God's glory. The words "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) denote something that is being bestowed upon them for a specific purpose. This power from on high was necessary to transcend what they, the disciples could do through their own human efforts. What a wonderful thought that God can clothe us with His strength and His Spirit to do His work here on earth! He adorns us with Himself even while we are in this earthly form. I find this truth to be very encouraging because it tells me that, even when I am feeling helpless in a situation, out of my depth, or just inadequate for a task, then I know that His Spirit is sufficient for me.

After spending time with His disciples, instructing and preparing them for forty days, it was finally time to leave them, physically:

### **The Ascension**

<sup>50</sup>When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup>And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God (Luke 24:50-53).

The vicinity of Bethany is the other side of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. Luke writes again in the Book of Acts about this same account when Christ was taken up from them in bodily form:

<sup>10</sup>They were looking intently into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" <sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near the city, a Sabbath day's journey away (Acts 1:10-12).

While they waited for the Spirit's filling, the disciples used the time by boldly meeting together in the Temple courts and praising God (Luke 24:53), not caring about anything that the religious elite might do to them. In quiet surrender, have you ever held your hands up to God and asked Him to fill you? Are you thirsty for more of Christ? That is the major qualification to be filled with the Spirit.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not been glorified (John 7:37-39).

Why don't you come to Christ today and abandon your life into the Good Shepherd's hands? He wants to take away your doubts and fill you with His Spirit if you will ask Him. Jesus has promised the believer His abiding presence. He promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. Whatever this life holds in store for you, He promises that you will not face it alone (John 16:7-14).

Dear Reader, you have walked through this study of the life of Jesus with me as I have observed it. We have walked with Him through the streets of Jerusalem, Capernaum, Galilee, Nazareth, Caesarea Philippi, and all over the land of Israel. We have witnessed His courage and His love for His friends as well as His enemies. We have watched Him extend mercy in works of healing and redemption. We have, together, as His disciples of old, listened to His teaching and observed His life. He has walked alongside us in human form to display the love of God the Father in a way that we can comprehend. My prayer at the end of this study is that you will have a fresh understanding of this book and that you will continue to walk beside Jesus daily, learning from His Word, and enjoying fellowship with Him. What you learn from Him, share with others.

Prayer: Father, come by Your Spirit to every heart that is thirsty for You. Let all doubts dissipate through the truth of Your Word. Come and touch each life reading these words. Amen.

Keith Thomas

Website: [www.groupbiblestudy.com](http://www.groupbiblestudy.com)

Email: [keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com](mailto:keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com)