

The Road to Emmaus

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to the chapter that we read, the Gospel of Luke, chapter 24, the final chapter, and let us read again at verse 27.

Actually, we'll read at verse 25 onwards. And he said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And we find a similar thing repeated in verse 44 when he is speaking to the disciples. These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. The account here that we have in this chapter of the resurrection and then of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the appearance of Jesus to his disciples and the ascension covers so much material that it is ground for a series of sermons rather than just one particular sermon.

[1 : 40] And I want to open up this evening to you some of the themes concerned within this chapter. And then hopefully, God willing, in a couple of weeks when I'm back again, to continue opening up some of the other things that are involved in this chapter as well.

The first thing that you notice from the chapter is, of course, the resurrection itself taking place at the very beginning of the chapter and the women who are there.

And you notice that the account of our Lord's meeting with Mary Magdalene is not actually given by Luke in this gospel. The resurrection itself is an amazing thing.

It's quite a fascinating thing to think that while some would have seen our Lord born, and many would have seen him during his ministry, many would also have seen him being crucified, that not a single human eye witnessed the resurrection.

No one was present when our Lord rose from the dead. And that, of course, has given rise to many theories and many doubts about whether the resurrection is actually true or not.

[3 : 12] And even until this day, there are many who dispute the resurrection. And, of course, if you dispute the resurrection, then you also dispute what is given at the end of the chapter, the ascension, and you dispute in many ways the whole theology of the Old Testament.

That is what our Lord does going to Emmaus. That he speaks to the two who are on the way there, and we'll have a closer look at them in a moment.

That he says to them, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, and by that is included all the books of the Old Testament, as he opens out again to the disciples, including the Psalms, that all these things pointed to the resurrection.

Even the Psalm that we were singing, Psalm 22, and the verses that we sang, you would have seen evidence there, both of the crucifixion and the resurrection, written over a thousand years before.

And it is, perhaps in many ways, amazing that even in some parts of the church throughout the world, there are still those who dispute and who preach that the resurrection did not take place.

[4 : 38] One wonders how, how you can justify salvation without the resurrection. We'll come to that in more detail, perhaps later on.

But I want particularly, first of all, to look at the two here who are going to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. That was more or less the limit that they were allowed to walk, by the interpretation of the law, on the day of preparation.

And it would seem that the two of them are returning here on this, what we would call the Sunday morning. Of course, remember that the Jewish Sabbath is now over, so they can, in fact, walk as far

as they want.

And the question comes up, first of all, why were they going home? And who were the two on the road?

One of them is identified to us very clearly in verse 18. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in those days?

[5 : 58] Who was this Cleopas? He's certainly not one of the twelve disciples. But he may well have been one of the seventy whom Jesus had sent out previously.

But we are given a little bit more information about him in other parts of the Gospels. And we find in John 19, and in verse 25, it says that John records the following for us.

And he says, as he writes about the crucifixion, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Now that is a very interesting detail. And if you think about it for a moment or two, it would mean that Mary, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a sister also called Mary.

And that would seem quite surprising to us. That two daughters would be given the same name, and not even as Mary I and Mary II, as is the custom in some countries still.

[7 : 10] But we may not be given the whole of her Jewish name there. But she's mentioned as the wife of Cleopas.

And if that is the case, then that means that Cleopas was the uncle of our Lord Jesus Christ. who was the other one who was with him?

It's very interesting, isn't it, that scripture does not give the name of the other person who was here. One of them. Two of them going to a village named Emmaus.

And it would seem from the details that we have later on, particularly in verses 29 and 30, they urged him strongly, stay with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.

So he went in to stay with them, while he was at table with them. It would seem that they are going home. That would suggest to us that the person along with Cleopas was probably none other than Mary, his wife.

[8 : 22] Now there are many who dispute that, of course. But one of the perhaps stronger arguments for saying that she is Mary, his wife, is that her name is not given.

And you might find that a strange reason. But if you think about it, at the time, women were not regarded as reliable witnesses.

That is why Luke does not cite the name of a woman. Whether that is still true or not, that's another question altogether, and I'm not going to enter into that one.

But it would seem that there is considerable evidence for us to think that the other person with Cleopas here is, in fact, his wife.

Going back home from Jerusalem. And why are they going back home? Well, they tell us very, very clearly that they are disappointed at the outcome of what has happened over the last three days.

[9 : 36] As Jesus questions them, they are talking, discussing together. Jesus questions them. And they say, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that happened there in those days?

What things? You notice how our Lord draws out from them their feelings and emotions about what has happened on the road. Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that happened there?

What things? Concerning Jesus of Nazareth. And you see how in verse 21 they say, But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

And behind that you get the feeling that they have that their hope is gone. That their hope is dead. That along with the crucifixion of the Lord their hope has died.

It's an amazing thing, is it not? And we see it in the rest of the chapter as well. How the disciples and the women who were with them failed to remember the words that Jesus had spoken to them.

[10 : 58] How often had he said to them that he would rise again on the third day. And you see this even from the woman at the tomb at the beginning of the chapter when the two angels speak to them and say in verse 6 He is not here but has risen.

Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

And you find in verse 11 that the disciples, the apostles, these words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them. But it's curious, isn't it, that his enemies remembered. His disciples, those who followed the woman round about, did not remember the words of the Lord. but his enemies did.

And if you look at Matthew 27 you will see how the chief priests and the scribes remember that he said he would rise on the third day and ask for a guard to be put on the tomb in case the disciples took the body away and then claimed that Christ had risen.

[12 : 25] sometimes it seems that those of the world have more faith in what scripture says than God's own people do.

And sometimes you and I are being rebuked by scripture for our lack of faith in the belief that we would have of the great doctrines of scripture.

And perhaps one of the greatest doctrines is the doctrine of the resurrection itself. Perhaps you and I have no difficulty in believing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After all scripture tells us so. Paul tells in great detail of those who saw the risen Lord quoting at one point up to 500 altogether in 1 Corinthians or is it 2 Corinthians I can't remember which one of the two it is just now.

But there are writers other than the biblical writers who quote the resurrection of Jesus. Josephus mentions it. That is no evidence of course that he believed it but he mentioned that the story was round about that the Jesus that had been crucified had risen again.

[14 : 07] But perhaps you are here tonight and you have no problem in believing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. but you have much greater difficulty in believing in your own resurrection.

You see one of the glorious truths of the resurrection of Christ is that it foretells the resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of the Lord's own people.

The resurrection of the body. And it's so hard for you and I to think of those who have been dead for perhaps thousands of years or even recently to think that the body that is disintegrating in the grave that the worms have eaten that nothing of which is left except the bones will rise from the grave again.

Maybe you have great difficulty in believing that about yourself. But that difficulty is simply caused by lack of faith.

By lack of belief in what the scriptures actually tell us. And it is this that our Lord expounds first of all to Cleopas and his companion on the road and secondly to the disciples in the upper room.

[15 : 47] Where does the doctrine of the resurrection come from? Well if you go back in the Old Testament you will find many passages but perhaps the key passage and we'll just take a second or two to look at it is found in the book of Job in chapter 19.

And those of you who are familiar with the book of Job will remember of course that Job is struggling to understand what is going on in his life.

You remember how God has permitted that Satan can attack Job without of course Job knowing what the cause of this is. That Satan can attack Job and we see Job losing first of all his material possessions and secondly all his children being killed.

And you remember that at one point even his wife says to him curse God and die. And his friends as they come to comfort him as they sit there first of all seven days in silence with him and then secondly as they begin to speak to him and discuss with him their point all the time is that Job must have sinned in some way must have offended God and that is why God is punishing him.

But Job maintains his innocence and throughout the speeches that you have the various discourses that you have in the book of Job you find in chapter 19 that Job says this at verse 23 he says oh that my words were written oh that they were inscribed in a book oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever for I know he says not I believe but I know that my redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another you see it's perhaps easy enough in one sense for us to believe that the spirit goes to heaven and that the spirit our soul is with

[18 : 22] God especially for the Lord's people that is what we look forward to but it is not so easy for us to believe that at the second coming of our Lord that the dead shall rise the dead in Christ shall rise first and yet that is there throughout the whole of the Old Testament and our Lord points this out was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory and

beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself oh I wonder what he said to them I wonder if you and I had been walking along the road to Emmaus if we could have recorded this conversation what did

Jesus say to them now that of course raises many interesting questions and we'll come back to that in a minute but perhaps the other question that we should deal with first of all is why did they not recognize Jesus you would have thought that those who were close to our Lord that once he has risen from the dead that they would have recognized him and you see this even with the disciples you see as Jesus appears to his disciples in verse 36 Jesus himself stood among them and said to them peace to you but they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit it was easier for them to believe that they were seeing a ghost rather than seeing the risen

Lord of glory there are many still like that it's easier for them to believe that the things of scripture are simply supernatural bits and pieces put together as stories and fables rather than the truth and the almighty word of God and there are many who dispute that you find of course in much of the new age teaching if you look at many of the things that are taught that they will accept many of them will accept the idea of spirits and angels etc but when they come to put that together with the evidence of scripture it is there that they refuse to believe you notice even the disciples were terrified at first were told in one of the other gospels that the door of the room in which they were was locked and almost certainly this was because of fear having seen the Lord crucified they probably thought that they were next on the list that the Jewish authorities would now seek the eleven disciples who were left and seek to have them also crucified so that all witness of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ would be eliminated there are those who still seek to do that today as you look at the suffering of the persecuted church and so many parts of the world you see how many different forces of evil are intending to silence the word of God to silence the people of God and to silence the witness of God's church it's quite amazing isn't it that when you look back at the history of communism the history of

Russia for example that one of the basic tenets of Marxism was that God does not exist you remember beforehand the German philosopher Nietzsche had said God is dead and this has been the cry of science in the last while that science disproves the existence of God but it's curious isn't it that in every single country where the gospel has been repressed that is where it has grown most strongly look at the history of the underground church in Russia until freedom comes during perestroika and glasnost look at the history of the church in China look even in North Korea perhaps the most repressive regime in the world the most anti-Christian regime in the world at the moment and yet you still find that there is an underground church why is it that in spite of the persecution of men there are those who refuse to renounce their faith and yet we see here that the two on the road to

[24 : 16] Emmaus and that the disciples had great difficulty with their faith they struggled to believe and even to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and perhaps so often when you and I struggle with our faith it is because we do not remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ we do not remember the things that are written in scripture and isn't that what happens to the two on the road after Christ has revealed himself to them they said to each other in verse 32 did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road while he opened to us the scriptures and isn't that the experience of every believer as your hearts are opened when the scriptures are opened to you that your heart begins to burn you want to know more and more and more about this

Jesus you want to come to know the risen Jesus you see one of the essential things that we have to remember is that without the cross the resurrection could not have taken place and without the resurrection the ascension could not have taken place so often we focus simply on the cross but we have to remember that the crucifixion and the resurrection and the ascension are essential parts of the glorification of our Lord all these things had to happen before the Lord Jesus Christ can ascend to the right hand of the Father all these things had to happen before the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and it is these things that bring our faith to be a living faith you see how the disciples struggled to believe you see how the two on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize Christ until he took the bread and blessed and broke and gave it to them and in a sense that almost seems to suggest that during that breaking of the bread that it was through that that they recognized who he was and there are some from that who think that these two people may well have been present at the last supper that may well be the case we always tend to imagine that the last supper with the disciples simply were the twelve disciples or eleven after

Judas had left and that no one else was present there at all scripture does not say that and it is very probable and again if you are familiar with the Jewish customs of how the Passover was to be observed the whole family would normally and that meant the extended family normally gathered together to celebrate the Passover meal our Lord's extended family included his disciples possibly all of them and almost certainly it would have included the woman who would have been there present not only in the service of the meal itself but also during the various cups that would be taken at the Passover and I fully believe and perhaps your minister will debate this one with me afterwards I don't know but

I fully believe that the woman and others were present at the Passover meal and perhaps from interpreting this passage here it would look that maybe Cleopas and Mary his wife Jesus' uncle Mary his mother's sister as immediate family could also well have been present at the meal me their eyes are holden from not knowing.

[30 : 09] Why would God withhold their ability to recognize him? So that he would open Moses and the prophets to them.

So that he would show from the Old Testament the things concerning himself. And these would not be things that were new to those.

Remember of course that the Old Testament scriptures were all that they had in those days. And they would most certainly have been familiar with them.

And it is the same with the disciples. And that's why we see what he says in verse 44. Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their mind to understand the scriptures. And you see that without the opening of our minds by the Lord Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit we can read so many things in the scriptures and yet fail to understand them.

[31 : 23] how is it that two people can read the same passage in scripture and to one it is full of life and yet to the other it is simply words on a page.

that it doesn't really mean very much.

Or you understand the words and you understand the sense of them but your mind still hasn't been opened to understand the scriptures.

What did he say to them? Beginning at Moses and of course beginning at Moses means at the books of Moses the first not simply the laws in Leviticus but the five books of Moses.

And I wonder very often if the first thing that our Lord explained both to the disciples and Cleopas and his wife were the words of Genesis.

[32 : 46] when Adam and Eve fell you remember the curse that was laid by God upon them for their disobedience.

But within that curse there was the promise of a blessing. And you remember when they were expelled from the garden that something quite amazing happened.

You remember that the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve in skins. Why?

Was it so that they wouldn't feel the cold? Well perhaps that was part of the reason. But if you think of something else God could not have provided the skins of animals as clothing from Adam and Eve without first killing the animals.

And you notice that God's mercy from the very beginning is shown through the shedding of blood. isn't that what the writer to the Hebrews says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

[34 : 21] And the very first act of mercy that you see in the Old Testament after the curse has been pronounced is through the shedding of blood.

blood. And the sign of blood runs all the way through the Old Testament. Look at the sacrificial systems.

Look at the Passover. Passover. It is through the blood of the Lamb that is sprinkled and then applied to the door and the lintel that the firstborn of the Hebrews are not slain along with the Egyptians.

And you see that there is no use in the blood being there unless it is applied. It had to be applied to the door post and the lintel.

There was no point in just having a basin full of blood in the house. And if you follow the sign of the blood throughout the Old Testament through the sacrificial system through the high priest entering into the Holy of Holies once a year and through the Ark of the Covenant and everything that was

involved with the mercy seed and the atonement that was made things that I hope to go into in more detail in the future you find that the sign of the blood is what cleanses from sin as a shadow and a symbol of what was to come.

[36 : 15] And what was to come was the cross at Calvary. You see there are so many who see like the disciples did who see the cross as a defeat who see the cross as a disaster.

How is it possible that the Messiah that was to come who had been as they say here as Cleopas says that we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel?

How is it possible that such a redeemer could die the ignominious death on the cross? But yet if you look throughout scripture how many times is that death on the cross prophesied and pointed to?

Look at Isaiah 53 Look at Psalm 22 Even the words that we were singing Look at Abraham taking Isaac up to the mount in order to sacrifice and look at the substitution that was made Again that's one of the passages that we'll come back to perhaps later on Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled And as you and I look at the cross of Calvary I wonder what you see there There are many as they look who see simply three crosses and three manufacturers being crucified

Nothing unusual in Roman times Perhaps Friday was the day of crucifixions seems to have been from contemporary records That this was nothing unusual that people condemned to death would be crucified And you see even as you look at the centurion who is at the cross that he has obviously done this many times before He's been in charge of the process many times before Christ And yet it's that same centurion who sees something different about this crucifixion Well there are many things that are different about it And again that's another sermon in itself But the centurion is able to say that truly this was the Son of God

[39 : 23] What did he see that the disciples didn't see What did he see that the others round about didn't see Well in order to understand that all we have to do is look at the other two crosses You see the cross of Christ the central cross is a cross of division It divides people It divides people's ideas It divides their responses and it divides their thoughts It divides them into those who see the cross of division as something glorious and those who see it as a disaster But look at the other side And on one side you see the thief who says

Lord remember me when you come to your kingdom The cross of decision He had made a decision that this was indeed the Messiah while his companion on the other side derides Jesus He saved others Himself He cannot save the taunts that came from those round about He had the power to do so And as you look at the death of

Christ on the cross you see that it is He Himself who gives up the ghost It is finished When the work isn't that what He says in the high priestly prayer I have finished the work that you gave me to do when the work is finished then He is able to give up the ghost There's the three crosses The cross of division in the middle and on one side the cross of decision and on the other side the cross of derision Still the same those who deride Jesus those who deride the resurrection the ascension and everything else involved with it And perhaps you're here this evening and you struggle to understand the purpose of these things

That is where you need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to open up as our Lord does to the eleven Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead Why?

So that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem You are witnesses of these things cau You offerings percent to the fruit of lives In Meine to come to those who are witnesses of these things.

[43 : 21] You need proof of the resurrection? Ask those round about you. Those who are here this evening who have seen and understood the purpose of the resurrection and met with the risen Savior and have come to know him personally.

They can testify to the power of the resurrection. They can testify to the power of the risen Christ. There are many who debate and discuss these things but without any personal knowledge of the risen Christ. And we pray that this evening that even as the two on the road to Emmaus had their eyes open, their eyes were withheld from seeing him on purpose by God the Father so that these things would be expanded to them.

We pray that in the same way if your eyes have been held up until now from beholding the glory of the risen Christ that your eyes would be open this evening to see him in all his glory.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word but we thank you above all things for the resurrection and everything that is connected to it.

[45 : 00] We thank you that even now through the ascension you are on the right hand of the Father interceding for your people and that you will come again and gather all your people to glory with you.

We pray for any who struggle with doubt this evening. We pray that through the presence of your Holy Spirit here that you would meet with them and that you would testify to them that these things indeed are true.

We thank you for your word and we thank you for the earnest of salvation that we have and that our Lord died for us. Be with us now as we conclude our service and pardon our sins through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Let us conclude then by singing verses in Psalm 43 in the Scottish Psalter on page 264. Psalm 43 on page 264. At verse 3 O send thy light forth on thy truth let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill even where thy dwellings be.

[46 : 18] And we shall sing down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 43 at verse 3 O send thy light forth on thy truth. O send thy light forth on thy truth that thou may be guides to me and bring me to thy holy hill in where thy glory be.

Then will thy truth God's altar home To God my chief has joined Yea, God, my God Thy name to praise My heart My heart Thy will My heart Thy will Embrace Why art Thou then Cast down My soul What should Discourage Thee And why And why With Lexing Thought Are Disquieted In Me To Trust In God For Him To To Praise Good Cause I Yet Shall Have He All My God And Sister Head My God God That Doth Me Save The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever. Amen. Amen.