

## Luke 24:13-31

*The analysis of the text follows messages preached Easter Sunday 1987 and 1996 at WIBC, but the emphasis drawn from the text is quite different than in those studies.*

### Introduction

For three and a half years, the disciples lived with the Lord, enjoying personal, daily contact with him. His death hit them as the death of a spouse would affect us today. Then he rose from the dead, and some of them expected that he would immediately bring in the kingdom of God (Acts 1:6), and continue in their midst. But God had another plan. The Messiah needed first to go “into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return,” and during his absence his followers were to “occupy till I come,” Luke 19:12-13. During his physical absence, he promised to be with them spiritually (Matt 28:20), but they needed to learn a different mode of interaction with him appropriate to these changed circumstances. Over 40 days, he appeared intermittently to them, teaching them how he would interact with them (and now with us) after his ascension. This history is part of that curriculum.

After setting the stage (vv. 13-18), the story unfolds in three stages.

- First (18-24), we meet two disciples despairing over the loss of the Lord.
- Next (25-27), the Lord addresses their problem through personal exhortation.
- Finally (28-31), full resolution comes through fellowship in a prototype of the local assembly.

This episode gives us a pattern for today. We also have questions and doubts. The Lord continues to minister to us following the pattern he sets here.

### 13-18, Setting

**Luk 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ...**

### *Whom do we meet?*

While the Lord was in the tomb, the apostles were not the only ones who were mourning him. Other disciples were huddled with them, fearing Jewish reprisals. The women who went to the tomb in 24:1

Luk 24:9 ... **returned** from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, **and to all the rest.**

They had been with the eleven, and returned to them.

Now we learn that “two of them,” that is, of this group of frightened disciples, have left Jerusalem. After they recognized him,

Luk 24:33 ... they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, **and them that were with them,**

These were people who had received the Lord’s teaching, and followed him. And when he does finally appear at the end of this chapter, it is to this group, not just the eleven, that he comes.

## Where were they going?

Their destination is a town called Emmaus. It is 60 furlongs = 7.5 miles from Jerusalem, about from here to Saline HS. The actual site of the village is debated, but a likely site is el-Qubeibeh (Figure 1, map reference 163138). They had been in Jerusalem for the Passover, but now the sabbath is over, the work week has begun, and they are returning to tend their affairs.

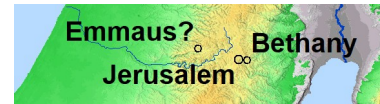


Figure 1: Emmaus and Jerusalem

## What were they doing?

**14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.**—As they walk, the Lord joins them, but does not permit them to recognize him until v. 31, when “their eyes were opened.”

Why does the Lord hide his identity? Each of his post-resurrection appearances is preparation for their life and ministry after his ascension, when he is no longer with them physically. By hiding his personal identity and ministering to them through the Scriptures, he anticipates how he now comes to each of us. We must learn to recognize in our brothers and sisters the body of Christ. Like the Lord in this episode, we must minister to one another through the Word of God, and receive that as the ministry of the Lord who is with us, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20).

**17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?**—“That ye have one to another” is literally “that you hurl back and forth at one another” They are confused about what has happened, and sad (v.17). Let’s consider first their confusion, then the two things that the Lord does to bring them to the point (v. 31) that they finally recognize his presence with them.

## 18-24, The Disciples’ Problem

In answer to the Lord’s question, the disciples unburden their hearts to him.

### 18, The Challenge: How come you don’t know?

**18 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?**—Cleopas’ question is almost a rebuke. “Are you the only person visiting Jerusalem this week who doesn’t know the events concerning Jesus of Nazareth?” He first relates things any visitor might have observed, then tells details known only to the disciples.

### 19-20, The Observations (General)

**19 And he said unto them, What things?**—The Lord asks him for details. Cleopas describes three details that even a “stranger” might have learned in the city:

**And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth,**—First, the discussion concerns Jesus in human terms: a man of Nazareth.

**Which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:**—Second, this Jesus had excellent spiritual credentials: a prophet, attested by a dual ministry, miraculous “deeds” and authoritative “word.” These were not in question. Even his adversaries agreed that “this man doeth many miracles,” John 11:47.

**20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.**—Third, he was opposed by the Jewish rulers.

## 21, The Discouragement

**21 But we trusted ἐλπίζω *elpizō* G1679 that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:**—They were favorable observers, not antagonistic critics. If anyone should have understood the events, they should have.

They describe their attitude with the verb “trust,” often translated “hope” (ἐλπίζω *elpizō* G1679). The term describes their confidence, but not its basis, a defect that the Lord will correct in v. 25.

**and [but] beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.**—The conjunction (ἀλλά *alla* G235) is actually a strong disjunction, marking a contrast. Contrary to their hopes, it has been three days. Jewish tradition taught that

the soul returns to the grave in three days, thinking that it might return (to the body). But when it sees that the color (shine) of its face has changed, it leaves him<sup>1</sup>

Before the end of three days, they had hope that the body might revive, but beyond that point death is deemed certain. Recall the raising of Lazarus:

Jhn 11:39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

They have waited this long in the hopes that the Lord might rise again, but now the time is elapsed. Perhaps that’s why they have left Jerusalem and are now on their way back to Emmaus.

## 22-24, The Observations (Personal)

Next, they introduce observations inaccessible to an arbitrary visitor to Jerusalem.

**22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; 23 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. 24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said:**—When they left Jerusalem, they knew that the tomb was empty, but one thing was missing.

**But (ἀλλά *alla* G235) him they saw not.**—As in v. 21, the strong disjunction reports negative evidence that depresses them. Not only have three days passed, but no one has seen the Lord.

They discount the testimony of the angels, “which said that he was alive” (v. 23). As Jews, they ought to have had greater respect for such testimony, for they believed that angels were the medium through which the law was given:

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<sup>1</sup> Strack, H. L., & Billerbeck, P. (J. N. Cerone, Ed. & Trans.; Vol. 2, pp. 625–626). Citing Bar Qappara in Genesis Rabbah 100 (64A).

Act 7:53 Who have **received the law by the disposition of angels**, and have not kept it.

Heb 2:2 For if **the word spoken by angels** was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

But they had been accustomed to a much more intimate relation with the Lord, far superior to the angel-mediated law:

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his Son**,

Often we find ourselves perplexed, as were Cleopas and his companion. How we wish that the Lord were with us physically, personally, to uphold us. Now, in fact, the Lord is with them, but he has kept them from recognizing them. How does he minister to them? Two scenes give us a pattern for us in our pilgrimage: individual encouragement and group fellowship.

## 25-27, 32, Individual Encouragement

First, he encourages them from the Scripture, as we can do one-on-one with each other. His reply follows the form of they said to him (Table 1, chart).

**25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe πιστεύω *pisteuō* G4100 all that the prophets have**

**spoken:**—They challenged the Lord with ignorance of recent events in Jerusalem. The Lord challenges them with lack of faith.

The Lord's verb, "believe" (πιστεύω *pisteuō* G4100), is a corrective to their verb "trust" (ἐλπίζω *elpizō* G1679) in v. 21. The two verbs are very different, corresponding to different Hebrew words in the LXX (see note).

- We *believe* when we receive God's revelation as true ("believe the prophets").
- We *trust* when we cast our confidence upon a statement.

We must *believe* before we have a reliable basis for *trust*. The disciples' trust was frustrated because it was not founded on belief of the Scriptures.

The word "fools" is be misleading. The Greek word (ἀνόητος *anoētos* G453) means "ignorant, unlearned." It is not the Greek word ἄφρων *afrōn* G878 used throughout Proverbs to denote the reckless, irresponsible, morally culpable person. They accused him of ignorance (v. 18 "hast thou not known ...). He is showing that they are the ignorant ones.

**26 Ought not [the] Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.**—They told him of events in Jerusalem. He replies with Messianic prophecies from the Scriptures. They were looking for the redemption of Israel (v. 21), but as David Pidugu has showed us recently in 1 Peter, the OT prophets also predicted the sufferings of the Messiah:

	18-22, Disciples → Lord	25-27, Lord → Disciples
Challenge	18 You don't know what's been going on in Jerusalem	25 You don't believe what the prophets said
Observations	19-20, 22-24 Public and private observations	26-27 The Scriptural promises
Response	21 Trust frustrated	32 Heart burned within

Table 1: Parallel Exhortations

1Pe 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Note three contrasts between their report and the Lord's words (Table 2).

- They spoke of "Jesus of Nazareth"; he speaks of **the** Christ.
- They emphasize what the human rulers did; he emphasizes the "ought" of divine sovereignty.
- They mourn that their nation Israel has not been redeemed, focusing on their carnal desires. He speaks of Messiah's own glory, the purposes of God.

	19-21, The Disciples	26, The Lord
The Subject	19 Jesus of Nazareth	The Christ
The Actors	20 the chief priests and our rulers	Ought (divine sovereignty)
The Objective	21 redeem Israel	Enter into his glory

*Table 2: Two Perspectives on the Cross*

**32 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?**—Later (32) they will admit that during the Lord's exposition their "hearts burn[ed] within" them.

The Lord's ministry to them shows one way that he ministers to us today. Every believer is a member of the body of Christ, with gifts that enable us to minister to one another. When we draw near to a brother or sister in need, Christ is drawing near to them, in us. Like him, we should direct their attention, not to circumstances, but to the Word of God, and encourage them to believe God's promises.

This personal encouragement is one way that the risen Christ continues to be with his people. He goes on to show them another.

## 28-31, 35, Group Fellowship

**28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And **their eyes were opened**, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. ... 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.**—The Lord's ministry to them does not stop with his bible study by the road. It continues in fellowship, and in particular, in fellowship around the table.

They are hosting him, and we expect one of them to give thanks for the food. But the Lord takes over the supper, with a sequence of actions (take → bless/give thanks → break → give) that Luke has recorded previously at the feeding of the 5000 (9:16) and the last supper (22:19). This is no longer their table. It is now the Lord's table, reminding us of the memorial that the Lord has commanded us to celebrate when we come together.

Their eyes are not opened until this time of corporate fellowship. Here is an important lesson for us. We should indeed minister to one another on a one-to-one basis, grounded in the scriptures, as the Lord did in vv. 25-27. But the full realization of his presence with us comes as we join

together in assembly, for doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, constituting “an holy temple in the Lord, ... an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:21-22). In this way, the Lord continues to be with us, ministering to our many needs, until he returns.

## Notes

### v. 21 ἐλπίζω G1679 vs. πιστεύω G4100

	בטח	הסָה	אֱמוּנָה	יחל	שבר	קוה		Total
ἐλπίζω	44	19	0	12	2	2		114
πιστεύω	0		88	0	0	0		81
Total	116	37	96	43	8	47		

The difference between hope/trust ( *elpizw* ) and believe ( *pisteuw* ): “Faith is the taking God at his word, while trust and patience and also hope are the proper fruits of faith, manifesting in various forms the confidence which the believer feels” (Girdlestone, entry for Hope). “The man who believes God is he who, having received a revelation from Him, realises it, and acts up on it as true. The man who trusts God is he who casts all his hopes for the present and future on God. It is the former quality, not the latter, that God regards as a condition of justification. Faith must precede hope, because a hope for the future which is not grounded up on a present acceptance with God is no hope; and a sense of acceptance which is not accompanied with a living, working faith is an unreality” (Girdlestone, Trust).