

The Heights Baptist Church

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS • JESUS AND THE CONFUSED • LUKE 24:13-35 • 2/21/2021

MAIN POINT

The Word of God brings clarity to who Jesus is and why an encounter with Him matters.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Where are you most likely to look for answers when you get confused about something? Where did people look for answers before Google was invented?

Now think about Christianity. Before becoming a Christian, what aspect of Christianity brought you the most confusion? What ultimately brought clarity for you? What questions or doubts have you heard people express about Jesus or about His resurrection?

Any number of things in life can be sources of confusion for us, and they either leave us frustrated and wanting to quit or curious to learn more. Christianity raises many questions in people's minds, and it is not uncommon to have conversations with people who are confused on who Jesus is. Jesus' encounter with the two men on the road to Emmaus, which we will read about today, helps us see that when we really study the Scriptures, we will see who Jesus is. When we understand the resurrection, the natural response is to go and tell others.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 24:13-24.

On the afternoon of Jesus' resurrection day, two of His disciples made their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They had been present in Jerusalem on the weekend of Jesus' crucifixion. They were discussing and arguing the details of the weekend. Although both had experienced it, questions remained unanswered in their minds. As they journeyed along, Jesus Himself came near, and He overheard their conversation as He walked along with them.

As the disciples walked to Emmaus, they were “discussing and arguing” the events of the past few days (v. 15). What do you suppose was the crux of their discussion?

These disciples said they were “hoping that He was the One who was about to redeem Israel” (v. 21). How do you think they understood this redemption they spoke of?

Why would it have been difficult for these followers of Jesus to grasp His true mission?

The two men described Jesus as a prophet powerful in action and speech. God empowered prophets to convey His message in word and deed, so the term carried a positive connotation. Jesus’ prophetic ministry received the approval of God and all the people. God’s blessing affirmed Jesus’ role in divine activity, and His popularity with people further confirmed His special nature. The two travelers acknowledged Jesus as a prophet. His disciples, however, expected more. Like other Jews of the day, they wanted a Messiah who would exert authority in the political realm. The death of Jesus appeared to vanquish that hope for them. At this point, the disciples still misunderstood Jesus’ purpose. He offered freedom for people enslaved by sin—this deliverance trumped any temporary military victory.

On the question of Jesus’ resurrection, what information did these two have?

Why do some people find it hard to accept Jesus’ resurrection as fact?

These disciples had heard the report of an empty tomb, but they struggled to understand what that meant, especially without a body. The tomb minus Jesus’ body only left these disciples feeling more confused. Like many people today, these two disciples were confused and disappointed because they didn’t have all the facts, and they had an incomplete grasp of Jesus’ mission.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 24:25-29.

By His words of correction, what did Jesus imply these two followers should have done?

We may be surprised that Jesus called the two followers “foolish and slow” (v. 25). He rebuked them for their failure to understand His mission and the words of the prophets. If they had understood the Scriptures, they would have seen immediately the significance of the report of the empty tomb.

How did Jesus add to their understanding of the Messiah’s mission?

To help these men understand who He was and why He came, Jesus used Scripture to paint a more complete picture of His redemptive purposes. Presumably, Jesus recalled sections from the Old Testament that supported His premise. Luke did not indicate which specific passages Jesus used. Jesus drew these two disciples back to the Bible's message about the Messiah. After citing references, Jesus interpreted for them the things concerning Himself. He used the Old Testament to remind them that glory follows suffering. The whole of the Old Testament points to God's working out His salvation purpose that culminated with Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

What examples can you recall of Old Testament passages that look forward to Jesus' mission of redemption?

We do not need to speculate about matters that have been clearly answered in Scripture. The Bible answers many of the questions people have about Jesus, His identity, and His mission.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 24:30-35.

Have you experienced a time when your eyes were opened to the truth of who Jesus is? If so, what brought you to that point? How has your life been different since then?

What feelings did the disciples experience while Jesus explained the Scriptures?

Have you experienced feelings like these as you have read or listened to the Bible?

What makes our hearts more or less attuned to these feelings?

God is calling us to move beyond knowing facts about Jesus to a place of believing and trusting Him as Savior and Lord. God still uses the proclamation and study of His Word to bring clarity to who Jesus is, why He came, and to kindle in people's hearts repentance.

Why did the two followers decide to return immediately to Jerusalem after Jesus disappeared from their presence, even though the day was almost over? What additional information did they receive when they arrived at Jerusalem?

Emmaus was seven miles from Jerusalem, but when these two were filled with confidence in the Messiah, they hurried back to share their experience. When we really study the Scriptures, we will see who Jesus is. When we understand the resurrection, we must then go and tell others.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is the value of discussing the truths of Scripture with other believers?

How does being part of a weekly Bible study or small group help bring clarity to your walk with God and your life on mission for Him?

Who do you need to share the truth of the resurrection with this week?

PRAYER

Ask God to continue to use Scripture to open our eyes to who He is and what His purposes are for us.

COMMENTARY

| LUKE 24:13-35

24:13-14. Perhaps still on the first day of the week, two disciples were going home to Emmaus after having been with the disciple band in Jerusalem. Modern scholars have no consensus about the precise location of Emmaus, although several sites have been suggested. The two disciples had one topic of conversation—the events of the day. We will learn shortly what these events were.

24:15-16. Their conversation was interrupted by a new traveler. Jesus joined the pair on the way to Emmaus. As he walked quietly with them, they did not recognize him. But walking with strangers along the roads of Jerusalem must not have been unusual. Their lack of recognition did not come from his being a stranger. It came because God kept them from recognizing him until God was ready for the Son to be known.

24:17. For one entering into the middle of a conversation, Jesus asked the natural question: What are you talking about? His question halted their progress. Their immediate response came from their faces, not their mouths. Sadness and grief were inscribed all over their faces.

24:18. Finally, we learn the name of one of the disciples—Cleopas. Luke's church certainly knew Cleopas, but we do not share their information. Cleopas was amazed that someone could have been in Jerusalem during the last couple of days and not heard the news. This must be a visitor, new in town today, he thought. Everyone knows about the crucifixion and rumors of angels and an empty tomb.

24:19. Jesus continued his probing, noticing how the disciples were reacting. They identified the central figure of their conversation: Jesus of Nazareth. They described him as a prophet whose words and actions showed he possessed unusual power. Jesus' actions were not hidden. He performed miracles and issued authoritative teaching in the open where both God and the

people could witness. The implication is that both God and people saw, heard, and approved Jesus' words and actions.

24:20. Cleopas placed all the blame on the Jewish leaders for Jesus' death. They took the initiative to arrest and accuse him. They took him to the Roman authorities. The Romans shared guilt in that they carried out the crucifixion that the Jews demanded. Here is another strong piece of evidence for the death of the Messiah. His death was not in secret, hidden from the public. His death came at the hands of the leaders, very much in the public eye, who would later try to disprove his resurrection.

24:21. Christ's death ended apostolic hopes. Here Cleopas in a very important passage summarized the hopes of Jesus' disciples before Jesus' death. They thought Jesus would redeem Israel. This Greek verb for redeem (*lutroo*) appears only here and in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 1:18 in the New Testament. It has a strong Old Testament background, appearing ninety times in the Septuagint, usually as a translation of Hebrew *gal'al*, "to set free, redeem." It is rooted in the Exodus story of God redeeming Israel from Egyptian slavery (see Exod. 6:6). Luke used a related noun as Zechariah prophesied the work of his son John. God is coming to redeem his people. Anna explained the significance of the child Jesus to those who waited for the "redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38).

The term is often used in the process of paying a ransom or price to gain the freedom of a slave. Luke sees Israel in captivity just as they had been in the time of the Exodus. In sending John and Jesus, God had repeated the miracle of the Exodus. He had paid the ransom price and freed his people from slavery. But the freedom was not through military victory as in Egypt but through the work on the cross, paying the price for the slavery to sin. The disciples saw in Jesus the one who would bring a new Exodus and free the nation from its Roman captors. Instead, Jesus proved to be something much more—the Redeemer who freed them from sin and death. But at this point the two on the road to Emmaus had no idea of this.

24:22-23. The disciples had not believed the women, but looking back on their story, they admitted their amazement at what the women said. They said Jesus was alive. Still, the disciples did not go out looking for Jesus. They did not stay together waiting for the risen Jesus to come to them. The disciples simply left Jerusalem for the safety and familiarity of Emmaus. Telling the story of resurrection did not elicit faith immediately from the disciples. It simply brought astonishment.

24:24. The women's story was verified. Some of the men went to check it out. This would probably include Peter's experience. The tomb was empty as the women said. But no Jesus.

Stories of resurrection but no resurrection sightings. What did one do? What could one think? Could one believe?

24:25-27. Jesus had heard enough. He called the disciples foolish just as Paul referred to his Galatian readers (Gal. 3:1, 3). The evidence stood before them, and they would not believe. They had not even placed this evidence over against the greatest source of knowledge they had. Scriptures pointed to Messiah's suffering before entering his glory. The disciples had it all reversed. They wanted Messiah to establish the glory of David's kingdom on earth before he died, his death probably marking the beginning of a new Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem. Jesus read Scripture in an entirely different way.

Then these two disciples received what each of us would give anything to have: Jesus' own interpretation of Scripture. Jesus showed just how the intention and wording of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures perfectly prepared the way for Jesus to come, minister, teach, heal, exorcise, be betrayed, suffer, die, and enter glory. What happened to Jesus was nothing new and unexpected. God had been preparing Israel for this all along. Scripture was full of Jesus. Any educated Israelite should be able to read Scripture and see Jesus.

24:28. Jesus started to leave the two disciples just as the conversation got interesting. He would let them go on home, and he would continue his journey.

24:29. The disciples would have none of that. They had a good excuse. Evening was falling. He could not go farther. He needed a place to stay. They had one. "Come on in. Let us continue the discussion. We want to hear more of what you say." Still, they did not recognize him or realize that his interpretation of Scripture pointed to no one but himself.

24:30. A major component of any meal was bread. Jesus acted as host, broke the loaf of bread, and distributed it to his disciples, just as he had often done, and especially just as he had done during the Last Supper. He said a prayer of thanks over the bread. The way he did it caught their attention. Now they focused on him.

24:31. Recognition came. It was Jesus. Immediately, he was gone, disappeared into thin air. This he could do in the resurrection body. He was now different from the way he had been before the crucifixion and resurrection.

24:32. They began immediately to share their thoughts and feelings with each other. Their grief had blinded them. Their attention to their own loss and sorrow prevented them from focusing on God and finding what God was doing for them at that very moment. And all this was a part of what God was doing, so they could hear Jesus out before they realized what was happening. A

disciple could see the risen Lord without knowing he was seeing the risen Lord. Resurrection faith depended on more than just physical presence and physical sight. It depended on spiritual presence and spiritual sight. That came in the breaking of bread, a symbolic act that took them back to the night of the Lord's Supper. They knew their hearts burned. They knew something special was happening as they heard Jesus explain Scripture. But they did not know him until they broke bread together.

24:33. The two disciples had to share their experience. No one in Emmaus would understand. They had to go back to the other disciples. They found them in their gathering place in Jerusalem. The eleven apostles were there. This means the two going to Emmaus did not include an apostle.

24:34. The two from Emmaus were not the first. Their story was not unique. The several women could not convince them that Jesus was alive. Simon could. What was the difference? Jesus had appeared personally to Simon and revealed himself to him. Luke does not tell the story of revelation to Simon Peter. He simply reports that Simon's story had convinced the others of the reality of the resurrection. People could believe without seeing the risen Christ. Personal appearance was not necessary to make people believe. Strong personal testimony about being with the risen Jesus was the necessary ingredient to make the resurrection story believable.

24:35. The Emmaus Road walkers added their testimony. They emphasized that recognition came only in breaking of bread. Physical presence was not enough. They needed the spiritual presence of the supper with the Lord. In so doing they left the ongoing church a reminder. Jesus is present with his people as they break the bread of his supper and remember his body and his blood.