

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

LUKE 24:1-53

The day you were hired...

The day you got pregnant...

The day you met your spouse...

The day your parent died...

These are landmark days in a person's life - days that made a difference. Yet they probably started out like all other days - a common, ordinary day.

At breakfast that morning you didn't think something would happen that would change your life forever.

Likewise, when the disciples crawled out of bed on that first Easter Sunday they had no idea they were *mere minutes* from a *miracle*... It seemed like such an ordinary day. Who would've dreamed this would be the day that would not only alter *their* lives forever but transform the whole course of human history?

After that first Easter, in a sense, **nothing had changed**... *Rome still occupied Palestine - religious authorities still had a bounty on the disciples' heads - sin, and death, and evil still bullied the world...*

Yet in another sense, **everything had changed**. For a new life stream had begun to flow that would cut an enormous channel in the nature of mankind and eventually catch billions of hearts in its undertow.

Luke 23 closes at **sundown**... Jesus is crucified. God is dead. And the world is a hopeless place... But Luke 24 opens

just before **sunrise**. Jesus is now risen. God has conquered death. And hope has been reborn...

Verse 1, “**Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.**” “***They***” were the women who attended the crucifixion, and escorted Jesus’ body to the tomb.

They had gone home for the Sabbath to prepare the spices to complete His burial. *And it can’t be overestimated how bleak their situation looked...*

The Savior was a stiff. Jesus was dead and buried...

The once-trusted Judas was a confirmed betrayer...

The chief priests and Pilate were murderers...

Their comrades, the disciples, were cowards...

It was a sad, sad scene indeed.

If anyone had remained faithful to the cause it was these women. They’d stayed to the end with Joseph of Arimathea, and knew exactly where Jesus was buried.

And it’s fitting, **that the last to leave the cross, were the first to arrive at the tomb!** God’s intention was to bless these ladies for their faithfulness. Those who were willing to share in *the sufferings of Christ* should be the first to experience *His resurrection power!*

“**But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.**” Keep in mind this was a heavy stone. Mark 16:3 tells us the women were talking among themselves, “**Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?**” They knew they couldn't

move it themselves. The stone easily weighed two tons. But when they arrive on the scene the stone had been rolled away.

John's Gospel says the stone was "taken away." The phrase is the translation of the Greek word "airo" - the stone caught air. It means, "to pick up and carry away."

Every heard of underground pressure blowing off a manhole cover. That's what happened to the stone.

The force of the resurrection was so powerful the stone popped off the mouth of the tomb like a cork from a champagne bottle - a two ton stone caught air.

Keep in mind the stone was not removed to let Jesus out. His resurrection body wasn't subject to the laws of nature. We'll see later Jesus could walk through walls.

The stone on the grave was removed not to let Jesus out, but to let the world in so we could see the tomb was empty - that Jesus was risen! Verse 3, "Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

"And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" This is what's engraved on the door of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, *He is not here, but is risen!*

There are famous tombs scattered all around the world... Hadrian's Tomb in Rome - Lenin's Tomb in Red Square - the Taj Mahal in India - Westminster Abbey in London - the

Pharaoh's Tomb, the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt - the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in Washington DC... But the world's most famous tomb, the Garden Tomb, is an empty tomb!

I'll never forget my first visit to the Garden Tomb. I took advantage of the opportunity. I went in and out of the tomb several times. I really looked the place over, gave it a thorough inspection - *and guess what?*

There's not a corpse to be found. The most famous tomb in the world is an empty tomb! **Jesus is risen!**

But an empty grave is not all you noticed at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. Look up and all along the top of the wall surrounding the compound is barbed-wire fencing. Sharp, glass shards are cemented into the wall. It's a sign of tension, and conflict, and war.

And it hit me, the folks who live near the tomb are familiar with the facts. Many of them probably believe in the truth of Jesus' resurrection - after all, they live next door to the proof! **They know that Christ has risen, but they've never experienced the risen Christ.**

I wonder how many of us here today are in the same boat. We believe Jesus is alive, but we've really never met Him. Or we have, but fail to live in His presence.

Notice again the question the angel asked the women, *"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"*

In other words, why are you looking in a graveyard for a man who's alive? Why are you treating a living, breathing

human being as if He were dead? Yet there are churches that are guilty of this every single Sunday.

Some church services I've attended were more a memorial to a dead man than they were an invitation to experience and know a man who is alive and well...

Imagine visiting the Lincoln Memorial on a February 12th, Ole Honest Abe's birthday. You would probably find a large crowd and Memorial Service in progress...

Someone would read excerpts of Lincoln's writings: *the Emancipation Proclamation or the Gettysburg Address*... Speakers would pull out points from those writings and make an application for today - *the equality for all men, and the importance of our national unity*...

Then someone else would recall and praise Lincoln's accomplishments: *how he freed the slaves and preserved the nation*... Then we'd all be encouraged to follow his example... value equality, honesty, courage.

But the one thing you'd never be asked to do - it would be ludicrous - you'd never be invited to come forward and meet Lincoln. *"Ladies and gentlemen, here's, Abraham Lincoln!..."* That would never happen.

Yet a lot of church services are no different.

We read the words of Jesus... Apply His teachings ... Recall His past accomplishments... Learn from His example... but that's where we stop! No one takes seriously that we can sense and know the risen Savior.

Our worship is more a *eulogy* when it should be an *encounter!* The message of Christianity is that Jesus is alive!

You don't go to a graveyard looking for Jesus. He is out and about. Jesus is even at work with us today.

Before He ascended, Jesus told His disciples, “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Don't just sing songs *about Him*, sing songs *to Him*.

Make your prayer as much about listening as talking

Follow a living person not just a wooden example.

And don't just work *for the Lord*, work *with Him!*

You and I, living in the 21st century can enjoy a relationship with a man who lived on this Earth in the 1st century - the carpenter from Nazareth is alive!

The two men, who were angels, continue to speak to the women at the empty tomb, “Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ And they remembered His words.” What had sailed over their heads so many times, now finally clicks.

“Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” The disciples wrote off the testimony of the women as wild hysteria.

Sadly, Jews in the first century put little stock in a women's testimony. A woman's word was inadmissible evidence in

Jewish court. Yet God trusted these ladies. They were the first persons told of Jesus' resurrection.

Verse 12, “But Peter arose and ran to the tomb and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.” I’m sure Peter wanted to believe!

He’d failed His Lord miserably. He thought all his hopes were over. *But could it be, could it be true Jesus was alive?* Sunday had begun with a startling surprise!

“Now behold, two of them (two disciples of Jesus, that is) were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.”

Emmaus was northwest of Jerusalem. Today it’s on the freeway that links Jerusalem with Tel Aviv, but in Jesus' day, it was at the end of a rocky, dusty road.

Emmaus is about a three hour walk from Jerusalem.

“And they talked together of all these things which had happened.” They no doubt had much to talk about.

Each miracle they witnessed had fueled their hearts with more excitement. *Each teaching* they heard had produced a deeper reverence for His wisdom. *Each day* these men had fallen more in love with their Lord.

And like many others, they had been so confident Jesus was Messiah. Their imaginations had run wild with visions of a future Kingdom. They never dreamed it would end this way. Now their hopes are sacked.

These guys are now wandering home confused, disillusioned, in a state of shock. All they know for sure is that it's over. They're returning to the hopeless lives they had known before... *traveling back to Emmaus.*

“So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.”

There were several possibilities for why they didn't recognize Jesus... For one we know Jesus bore scars. He showed Thomas the scars in His hands and side.

But there were facial scars. Isaiah predicted He'd be beaten so severely you wouldn't recognize Him as a man. Those scars may've obscured His recognition.

This also could've been due to some supernatural screening. God threw a veil over their eyes until they had fulfilled the prerequisites. To meet the risen Christ you have to believe. *That's true today. It was true then.*

Verse 17 “And (Jesus) said to them, “What kind of conversation *is* this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?” Then the one whose name was 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?” *“Man, where have you been? Haven't you seen the news?”*

“And (Jesus playing it a bit coy) said to them, “What things?” 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.”

And the saddest word in their statement, “(Jesus) *who was a prophet...*” They speak of Him in the past tense. Their faith that once was, no longer exists.

They were so confused. *If Jesus was mighty in deed and word how did He get trapped and crucified? If He was a prophet why did God allow Him to be killed?* None of this made any sense in their Jewish rationales.

And some of you are just as confused. You too are facing circumstances that don't make sense based on the assumptions you've made about God. As was said of Christopher Columbus, "When he departed, he didn't know where he was going. When he arrived, he didn't know where he was. And when he returned, he didn't know where he had been." That's how you feel.

The road to Emmaus is a confusing place. God is working in ways you don't expect and you're oblivious.

Verse 21 is sadder still, “*But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.*” Again, they say, “*we were hoping.*” Apparently, their hope had died.

Not only were they *confused intellectually*, they were also *crushed emotionally*. They felt that Jesus had let them down personally. All the disciples staked their future on Jesus - *and He'd given in without a fight* - why didn't He work a miracle and at least try to escape the cross?

Didn't He know they were depending on Him?

They continue, “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.” It’s as if they’re saying “We heard these wild reports, but how can you believe a few hyper-emotional women.”

These men are in dire straights. They’re *intellectually confused, emotionally crushed, and **spiritually conquered***. They no longer have hope for a miracle.

These guys had lost touch with spiritual realities. Life with Jesus had made them believe in a higher plane, but how quickly their experience with heaven had been shattered by the bitter realities of a cruel crucifixion.

Let me suggest the road to Emmaus not only runs seven miles northwest of Jerusalem, but at some point, it cuts through the heart of every Christian. There are times when you're *confused intellectually: you don't understand God's purposes...* Or *crushed emotionally: you feel forsaken like God has let you down...* There are even times when you are *conquered spiritually: hope is gone. You're too tired and weary to believe.*

You thought God loved you, but now you're not sure.

The road to Emmaus is a lonely stretch of existence.

It winds and winds, and seems to head nowhere, but here's an ironic twist - *on this road the answer they were looking for*

was right beside them. Jesus was with them! And Jesus is with us on our road to Emmaus.

He's faithful to join us. Our problem is we're blind to His presence. The explanation for their confusion, the balm for their hurt, the flame to reignite their faith... all they need is within arm's reach. Jesus was with these two discouraged disciples, but they didn't realize it!

Verse 25, "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 into His glory?" Jesus reveals why their eyes are closed - *they're "slow of heart to believe."* God wants to open our eyes to the risen Christ, but there's a prerequisite – we have to believe!

And not just *believe, but with our hearts.*

"With heart" is the Bible's word for desire, passion, commitment. It's a leading term. Something comes next. Folks can believe intellectually, but not act any differently. But when you believe with your heart everything changes. Faith is coupled with eagerness.

And that's when God opens your eyes! Suddenly, Christ is revealed to you! You sense His presence. And you're never the same. It's been said, "Man's knowledge must be understood to be loved. But God's knowledge must be loved to be understood." It's when you love Jesus, that He reveals Himself to you.

Verse 27, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning

Himself.” What a Bible Study! If only they’d had some recording equipment handy...

Jesus goes **through the Bible**. He started in Genesis, and taught how the OT speaks of Him on every page!

“Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. 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.”

And since that day Jesus has never turned down a request for Him to abide with anyone. In Revelation 3:20 He says this is His desire. **“Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”** Today He’s knocking on your heart’s door.

There once was a billboard on I10 in Louisiana. You saw it just as you approached the Mississippi River bridge. It was a picture of Jesus on the cross, and the caption read, **“It’s Your Move.”** And ever since our Lord Jesus died on the cross, the ball is now in our court...

Verse 30, **“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.”** What was it that finally sparked their faith?

Apparently, it was something about the way He handled the bread? And here’s my theory - *I believe they saw the scars in His hands.* As author Phillip Yancey writes, **“Jesus can always**

prove His identity, no other living person bears the scars of crucifixion.”

When they saw His scars it was undeniable. His scars ignited their faith - and in turn, opened their eyes.

And remember the succession, *the eyes aren't opened until the heart believes*. It never happens in reverse. Folks want God to open their eyes; then they'll believe. That's not the way it works. You believe; then God opens your eyes! As Jesus told Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

“And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” A burning heart was the aftermath of being in the presence of Jesus.

This was a case of *good heartburn*. Their passion was stirred. Hope was rekindled. Faith was reborn. And it happened when Jesus opened up the Scriptures.

When a discouraged and defeated John Wesley stumbled into a church on Aldersgate Street in London, he listened to a reading of Martin Luther's commentary on the book of Romans. The message of justification by faith alone, through Christ alone, is what captured his imagination and stirred his heart. He wrote of his experience, "my heart was strangely warmed."

Note here, the stirrings of revival aren't the result of all night prayer meetings, though prayer plays a role. Nor is it the result of a unified church, though the church should come together. And a *burning heart* doesn't come through anointed

praise, though we should be worshipping God... A burning heart - a heart on fire for God - a lasting passion - occurs when the Scriptures are opened and Jesus is proclaimed!

Revival comes, when like these two disciples, we go back to the drawing board, re-open the book, and seek Jesus on every page. *You'll burn with love for the living Word; when you fill your heart with the written Word.*

“So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem...” From Emmaus to Jerusalem is an uphill climb. That they found the energy to return that day is proof of the excitement that filled their hearts.

“And (they) found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon! And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.” The men from Emmaus discover that Jesus had also appeared to Peter. They all were overjoyed.

And you wonder what it was like for Peter to face the risen Christ after His crushing denial. Apparently, Jesus *bathed him in grace and showered him in forgiveness.*

“Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.”

Jesus pops in! He just appears out of thin air.

And what a greeting they receive, especially when you consider the last time Jesus saw them, He was watching their backsides as they dodged trees and fled for their lives through the Garden of Gethsemane.

In one sense, I'm sure they were dreading this meeting. *What would Jesus do?* They probably feared judgment. Instead, He immediately puts them at ease.

"Peace to you." Its grace. Here's what you should never forget, **a risen Christ means a second chance!**

And verse 37 records their reaction, **"But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit."** They thought Jesus was a ghost - an apparition.

"And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet." Again, He was identified by His scars. Jesus was no longer flesh and blood. His blood had been spilled for us! But He was still flesh and bone.

His body had changed, it had been transformed, but it was the same body that hung on the cross. For proof, He showed them His scars, His undeniable scars!

It's always a provocative thought to remember Jesus still has those scars. When we get to heaven we'll see His scars. I believe when we've spent the first forever of infinite eternities, Jesus will still have His scars.

It's been said, **"The only man-made thing in heaven will be the scars on our Savior."** His scars will serve as an eternal reminder of His great, great love for us.

When Jesus just popped in on the disciples He proved He was no longer bound by time and space. He could walk through walls. Paul spoke of resurrection to the Corinthians, “this corruptible body must put on incorruption, this mortal body must put on immortality.”

Make no mistake, Jesus’ resurrected body was the body that was crucified. He was still the same Jesus.

Novelist, John Updike, once wrote, “Make no mistake: if (Jesus) rose at all it was as His body; if the cells’ dissolution did not reverse, the molecules reknit, the amino acids rekindle, the Church will fall.” His bodily resurrection was crucial. Jesus didn’t swap bodies. His one and only body was subjected to death. So when He rose, He defeated death once and for all.

Verse 41, “But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled...” Apparently, their fear was gone, but they still weren’t believing what they’re seeing. They were pinching themselves - laughing - glad and giddy!

And Jesus offers further proof. “He said to them, “Have you any food here? So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took *it* and ate in their presence.” Ghosts don't eat fish and honey, but Jesus does. His resurrection body still gets hungry. And it helped the disciples digest the truth!

“Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” Verse 44 is an important

proof text. It reveals what Jesus considered to be the inspired measure of Scripture. And He lists the three divisions in the Hebrew Bible: **the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.**

This corresponds to what we have in our OT.

Notice, Jesus doesn't mention the Apocrypha, or the Talmud, or the Mishnah, or any other Jewish writings.

Jesus limits the OT to the five books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms or poetical books - *the same collection accepted by Jews and Christians today.*

And from that Bible **"He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures."** Again, it's the Bible and the study of it that stirs up faith!

"Then (Jesus) said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things." I love the Greek term that's translated **"witnesses,"** it means **"part of the evidence."**

Your life and my life should be *"Exhibit A"* that Jesus is risen! If a lawyer needed proof that Jesus is alive could he point to you? *Are you full of joy? Have changes occurred in you that can only be explained by a living Savior? Are you walking in resurrection power?*

Verse 49, **"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."** In Numbers 11 Moses chose seventy men to help him oversee Israel, and settle disputes.

But before they began their ministry he called these men outside the camp, and God took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and placed it on these seventy sidekicks. When the Holy Spirit came upon these men they spoke in prophecy and ecstatic utterances. It was divine communication.

Two of the men were still in the camp when the Spirit of God came upon them and they prophesied. This exposed God's power to the rest of the camp.

And Joshua was upset. He thought these holy happenings should be reserved for only those chosen for the task. He wanted Moses to muzzle the prophets.

But Moses had the opposite desire. In Numbers 11:29 he prays, "Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them!" Moses longed for the day when all God's people, *not just a select few*, were endowed with power from on high. And Moses' wish became God's promise!

This is what Jesus calls "*the promise of the Father.*"

It was repeated throughout the OT. Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour My Spirit on your descendants." Ezekiel 39:29, "For I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel." In Joel 2:28 which Peter will quote on the Day of Pentecost, "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh."

This is what Jesus called "*the promise of the Father.*"

It must've been a Calvary Chapel pastor who said, "Promises are like crying babies in the sanctuary, they should be carried out immediately." But there are some promises that take time to come of age - to mature.

The Father had promised for over a thousand years to bless His people with this power. Now Jesus tells His disciples the fulfillment is just days away. He wants them to wait in Jerusalem. For there, God will “*endue*” them - literally “*clothe them*” in supernatural power.

And this dynamic is available to us! This is the power that breaks chains and chases fears. The outpouring of God’s Spirit produces boundless love and boldness. It turns *wimps* into *witnesses* - *legalists* into *lovers*.

RA Torrey was once asked if he’d received *the second blessing?* In other words, not just saved, *but filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit?* Torrey responded, “Yes, and the third blessing, and the fourth, and the fifth, and hundreds beside, and I’m looking for a new blessing today.” God wants to clothe you in a power far greater than your own - *a divine dynamo!*

“And (Jesus) led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.” Bethany was east of Jerusalem - on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Mary, Martha, Lazarus all lived in Bethany.

“Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.”

What a moment this must’ve been!

Like folks at Cape Canaveral watching a NASA lift-off, Jesus starts rising from the ground into the clouds. He’s soaring like a runaway, helium-filled balloon.

I love what author Phillip Yancey writes about the ascension, “When Jesus returned after death to vaporize all

doubts among the remnant of believers, He tarried a mere forty days before vanishing for good. The time between Resurrection and Ascension was an interlude, nothing more. If Easter Sunday was the most exciting day of the disciples' lives, for Jesus it was probably the day of Ascension. He the Creator, who had descended so far and given up so much, was now heading home. Like a victorious soldier returning across the ocean from a long and bloody war. Like a successful astronaut shedding his spacesuit to gulp in the familiar atmosphere of earth. Home at last - Jesus was finally going home." His ascension was Jesus' last lap down the home stretch. It had colossal meaning.

It was proof the Father had accepted His sacrifice.

It was Jesus stepping into His new role as our High Priest and assuming His new post at the Father's right hand. Two thousand years later He's still on the job.

Verse 52, *And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen."*

I love Augustine's prayer, "You ascended before our eyes, and we turned back grieving, only to find you in our hearts."

The disciples now were confident that Jesus through His Spirit would always be with them.

Notice, Luke began and ends in the Temple.

It opened with an aged priest receiving *the promise of the Messiah*. It now closes with that promise fulfilled, and God's people waiting on another - *the Promise of the Father*. That

becomes the theme of what we'd call Second Luke - the sequel - **The Book of Acts**.