

Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday – Luke 24:36-43 – Jesus appears in their midst.

The two men who had met Jesus on the road to Emmaus are now sharing the news of what they had experienced with the eleven apostles and other followers of Jesus who had gathered in a home in Jerusalem. Suddenly Jesus appears in the midst of them all. John tells us that the room doors were locked (John 20:19) for fear of what the Jews might do if they found them all together. So there is no way that Jesus entered the room as you and I would have to, i.e., through a door. In his risen, glorified state, Jesus is not confined by time and space, nor by structures. Note that Jesus didn't walk through anything; as some have surmised, he appeared where and when he wanted, and equally, he disappeared instantly. This is wholly supernatural and incomprehensible to you and me, for we are confined by the world of space and of time, and there is nothing we can do to escape one or the other. Maybe when we are glorified in heaven, we will understand more about this, but that is a glorious expectation yet to be realized in Christ.

Jesus says three words, "Peace to you!" Of course, the word 'peace' has so much import coming from the now-risen Lord, for it is through his death and resurrection that men and women, chosen before the foundation of the world, will be reconciled to God and be enabled to enter into their eternal peace.

Although peace has entered the room like never before, these people are frozen with terror and fear. It's one thing to be sitting, listening to two men speaking about their encounter with Jesus in his glorified form; it's an entirely different thing for him suddenly to be present in the same room. They don't know what to make of this appearance. It's beyond what they can process. It is the same reaction the apostles had when they were on the sea of Galilee, and Jesus walked out to them across the water (Matthew 14:26). The difference on this occasion is that no one says what they think; they are riven with fear. Next week we will see that their fear turns to joy.

Q1. Who appears in the room where the eleven and others are gathered?

How does Jesus appear?

Q2. What does Jesus say?

Q3. What is the reaction of those present?

Thursday – Luke 24:28-35 – “Did not our hearts burn within us!”

Jesus is eating with them, and when their eyes are opened to recognize him, he leaves, not out the door but vanished instantly. It’s remarkable how they seem to accept this. Luke doesn’t record a great exclamation of horror or fear. There is no frantic searching of the house to see if Jesus has gone to another room. There is an acceptance that he has gone. What Luke does tell us is that the two men talked about their experience with Jesus on the road from Jerusalem and what a wonderful way they have of expressing it – “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” The impact that Jesus had had on them was neither causal nor fleeting. In the moment, they had been overwhelmed with joy and delight, and now that is what they remember. Their hearts were set on fire as they listened to Jesus unfold and interpret the Scriptures. As they had been enabled to understand for the first time the meaning of passages taught to them in childhood and read numerous times in their hearing in the synagogue, they had been deeply affected. Because this wasn’t about opening a box of theologically mysterious secrets; this was a revelation of who the Messiah truly is. This remarkable encounter, which they now look back on, will live with them for the rest of their lives.

They cannot keep this to themselves, so they get up and return to Jerusalem. They know where the eleven apostles will be, and they find them with a number of other followers of Jesus. When Mary Magdalene had first broken the news of Jesus’ resurrection, only Peter and John were to be found. Still, everyone is gathered to try and piece together what is happening in this fast-moving situation. The two men excitedly declare that Jesus has risen, just as Mary had said, and that he had met with Simon (Peter) (Paul would later corroborate this in 1 Corinthians 15:5) before they share the news of their encounter with the risen Lord.

Q1. How do the two men speak of the impact on them of their encounter with Jesus on the road?

Q2. What do they then go?

Q3. Whom do they find, and what do they say?

Monday – Luke 24:13-27 – What are you talking about?

Jesus has asked the two men making their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus what they have been talking about. They stop and stand still. Unsure what to say, they initially say nothing. Why not? Would they usually be this impolite? I don’t think impoliteness is holding them back from speaking. It’s evident that they still don’t know who this stranger is who has joined them and is asking the question, and Luke also tells us that they look sad. They’ve been talking about the death of Jesus and what that means for his followers; it’s a subject that has eaten into both their hearts, and it’s etched on their faces. Then one of them speaks; Luke tells us his name is Cleopas. But Cleopas doesn’t answer the question asked. He responds with a question of his own, which his companion is probably nodding his head in agreement with. Do you hear the incredulity in Cleopas’ voice? He can’t believe that this stranger, coming from Jerusalem, doesn’t know what has happened in the city. The implication is, ‘where have you been for the past week - living in some isolated world all of your own?’

Jesus, with perfect calmness, responds as though he knows nothing of what has happened. He is preparing and leading these men to see him as their risen, glorified Lord. To his question, ‘what things?’, he gets the response he’s seeking. First, they note the place of his upbringing, Nazareth; significant because of the recorded insignificance of this village (John 1:46). Then, they cite his powerful ministry in word and miracle, a ministry which God had evidently approved of, as did the many people. The precise facts of his trials are now stated, with the Sanhedrin being identified as the principal movers and, therefore, prime agents in handing Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. (Although Pilate is unnamed, he also is implicated because he is the only one in Jerusalem to pronounce capital punishment.) It is a response full of emotion, not least when the point is made that the people were looking to this Jesus as their Messiah. They continue, recounting how the women had found the empty tomb, only to see the vision of the angels pronouncing that he was alive, and they conclude by referring to those who had gone to the tomb to see for themselves that it was empty. Nothing is omitted in this brief but accurate summary of the most salient points of Jesus’ life, death and subsequent events surrounding his body.

Little did they know that they were recounting these matters to the very one they were talking of.

Q1. How do the men respond when Jesus asks them what they are talking about?

Q2. Why does Jesus ask them this question?

Q3. How do they respond to his second question?

Tuesday – Luke 24:13-27 – Jesus unfolds the prophecies about himself.

In response to Jesus questioning them, these two men have spoken out of their sadness about the events they have witnessed unfolding in Jerusalem the previous week. Everything they have said has related specifically to the person, work, and death of Jesus. Now it is Jesus' turn to respond, and it's surprising. These men are heartbroken, and yet Jesus' tone is one of rebuke. There's an apparent absence of sympathy, let alone empathy. Why? If he could reach out in the upper room in pastoral concern when he saw in the faces of the Apostles their shock at his statement that he would be leaving them and ministering to their hearts and minds (John 14), why could he not do the same here? It's a question to which I'm not sure I have the answer; I could speculate, but it's one that I will have to ruminate on further, and that's okay. Providing we are being honest and not lazy in our study of God's Word, we don't always need to be able to answer every question we ask of God in His Word.

What is clear is that the Lord is addressing their hearts, specifically their unbelief. Yes, he addresses their minds and thinking with his statement, "O foolish ones". It's an assertion that they should have known more of what the Word of God has to say about the Messiah. But then he moves onto the unbelief residing in their hearts - their slowness to believe. It's not that they don't believe at all; of course, they do; their recounting of Jesus' life and work clearly showed what they believe. They believed that the Messiah would come and establish his kingdom, but they had failed to grasp the true nature of the Messiah's work and kingdom. They had come to understand so much and yet are culpable of knowing so little. That's personally humbly and convicting.

The question Jesus now asks in verse 26 is rhetorical. Surely it was obvious from what the prophets wrote in the Old Testament that the Messiah, far from being the nationalistic knight in shining armour who would come in and sweep all before him, would be one who would suffer many things and then enter into his glory. The answer, of course, is 'yes'. It is obvious, but these two men had not seen it, and before we stand and glare at them, let's remember they are typical of those who had followed Jesus. The point is made, and as Jesus continues with these men towards Emmaus, he unfolds all the prophecies from Moses forward concerning himself, interpreting each prophecy in turn and speaking of its fulfilment to date. Now there is a conversation one would like to have been part of.

Q1. How does Jesus address these two men?

Q2. He speaks first to what they know and then to what?

Q3. What does Jesus show these men?

Wednesday – Luke 24:28-35 – Their eyes are opened to see Jesus.

As they near the village of Emmaus, Jesus does something usual; he pretends he is going on through the community. Why? Well, he is providing these men with an opportunity to respond to what they have heard. It is their call on whether they will offer him the hospitality that might have been reasonably anticipated. They don't fail the opportunity to serve the risen Lord; in fact, they claim it with both hands. Luke tells us they constrain him to abide with them. But is there not more than just the offer of hospitality? Is it not the case that they want to be in Jesus' company? They have experienced his presence, and even though it began with a rebuke, their delight in life is far greater in being with him than without him. Isn't it wonderful that this, too, can be your experience and mine - that it is far better to be with Jesus than without him?

The table is set for the evening meal, and Jesus is reclining, as was the practice in a Jewish home. What's interesting is that Jesus assumes the role of the host as he takes the bread, pronounces the blessing, and then gives it to those at the table with him. Is he acting presumptively here? No, it's natural. As a minister, I have often been asked to give thanks for the food when visiting a home. It's not that I expect to be asked, but it is what has often happened because of my role. What happens here is just that. Jesus had shown himself to be the teacher as he'd walked with these men, and now neither of them thought it odd that he should proceed as he did. It's at this moment that it happens. Suddenly the eyes of these two men are opened, not physically but in a spiritual sense (not savingly that had happened previously). They recognize Jesus for the first time since encountering him on the road from Jerusalem. It must have been an astonishing experience. And then instantly, Jesus is gone; he vanishes before the very eyes that had just been opened to recognize him. The place where he had reclined at the table is no longer occupied. He had gone. But how? By means of his new glorified power. These men were not the first to see the risen, glorified Lord; that privilege belonged to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and also, as we shall see, to Peter; but these men are the first witnesses, at least the first recorded ones, to have seen Jesus instantly depart from someone's immediate presence.

What did this mean? It meant that Jesus was communicating that his newly risen, glorified form was distinct, different from his previous incarnate nature.

Q1. How does Jesus come to be in the home of one of these two men?

Q2. What does Jesus do?

Q3. What happens as soon as they are enabled to recognize Jesus?