

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-26 The Road to Emmaus

Have you ever gone on a journey and unexpectedly met an old friend? The only problem was you couldn't remember the person's name. You knew the face but the name would not come into your mind. This can be very embarrassing! It sometimes happens when your mind is not clear but focused on some problem. A similar situation faced two of the disciples after the death of Jesus. On this occasion they didn't even recognize Jesus when he came and walked with them.

Later the same day Jesus rose from the dead, two disciples were going to a village called Emmaus. It was about 11 kilometers (seven miles) from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them. But, they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

These two disciples were not a part of the twelve apostles, but they were among Jesus' close followers. Luke's account suggests that God kept them from recognizing Jesus. Their physical senses temporarily had a blind spot. Also having a spiritual blind spot, they had failed to understand Christ's repeated messages concerning his death. When he asked them to explain their sorrow, they eagerly shared their understandings of the recent strange events.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus" (Luke 24:13-27). For these two, it seems that only the appearance of Jesus himself would have been convincing.

Notice that their hopes had changed after the crucifixion. They viewed Jesus as a powerful prophet and miracle worker. After his death they apparently were reluctant to call him the Messiah. Their hopes for deliverance from Rome were gone. They could no longer use that word. What they were missing was the message of the Resurrection.

Some Jews believed the soul left the body after three days, so a person was hopelessly dead. Now, the third day since his death, strange reports had come. Some of the women reported his body was gone. They had seen angels telling them that Jesus was alive. These two disciples didn't seem to believe the women's testimonies. Neither had Peter. An empty tomb by itself did not produce faith in the resurrection. This kind of faith came only from understanding and accepting the words of scripture. That is why Jesus pointed next to scripture.

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

What Jesus was implying was that the events of the past week should have been no surprise to them. The unifying theme of the entire Bible is the life and sacrificial death of the Messiah. Jesus rebuked them for their failure to believe the scripture they had, the Old Testament. The prophets of old spoke about the Messiah's death and resurrection. Jesus gave them an oral Bible study, explaining the many prophecies about his life. Even so, they still did not recognize him.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on, as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Because of the dangers of the road, people did not usually travel at night.

Then when he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They probably went into an inn that offered food and lodging. At the table Jesus took the bread, thanked God for it and gave it to them to eat. It was then that God opened their eyes. They were able to recognize the stranger as Jesus. But just as quickly, he disappeared from their sight. Jesus was not recognized by his face or even his teaching. It was his prayer of thanks to the Father for food that was so familiar to them. They had seen him do this hundreds of times before. They recognized Jesus by the way he addressed God, by his relationship with the Father. Then they remembered the power of his words and the conviction in their hearts while he had spoken to them on the road.

Having seen the risen Lord with their own eyes, they left the inn. They could not wait until morning. The two hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the others. There they found the Eleven and those with them. They were assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread (Luke 24:28-35).

This story is **important** because it shows the disciples' limited understanding of God's plan. Even after the Cross and Resurrection had taken place, they found them hard to accept.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and revealed himself to the disciples many times with his new glorified body.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What were the two disciples discussing on the road to Emmaus when they met Jesus?
A. [Pause] If you said they were talking about the recent things that had happened concerning Jesus in Jerusalem, you are correct.
2. What did Jesus explain to the two disciples about the Messiah on the road to Emmaus?
A. [Pause] If you said Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself, you are right.
3. What did Jesus do that was so familiar to the two disciples?
A. [Pause] If you said, “He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them and then their eyes were opened,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell it to someone, ask and discuss this question, “What were the possible reasons these two disciples were leaving Jerusalem after Jesus’ death?”

Possible answers: They were disillusioned; they believed Jesus’ ministry was finished because he was dead; they were returning to their previous lives; their faith in Jesus as the Messiah was almost gone; they were grieving and didn’t know where to go.