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Your Bible Teacher is Here and Ready

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TEXT: Luke 24:36-53 (ESV)

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Dear friends,

Many people in the city of Jerusalem were absolutely mystified. They asked among themselves, “What's going on with those disciples of Jesus? They seem to have a whole new lease on life now. So joyful – wasn't their leader just killed? Now they're publicly worshipping in the temple every day, blessing God. What's happened to them?” The answer is simply this: Easter happened. The disciples had an encounter with the risen Jesus Christ, and He's opened their minds and given them a whole new perspective on life. There seems to be a couple of important things, takeaways, that Jesus seemed intent on communicating to his disciples in this resurrection appearance today.

First, we see that He wanted them to know and understand the whole story of the Bible. And so, He taught them. He led them through a biblical overview, a survey of the Old Testament. It was important that they understand the big picture for a couple of reasons: [first] so that they could better understand Him and appreciate Him, who He is, why He came, what He accomplished, and so they could see that God is behind all this in His faithfulness. And, so they could better communicate the gospel message to others. They would use this material in their sermons, as we'll see in the Book of Acts, explaining that the resurrected Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of God to rescue His people. Also, they could see where they fit into this whole thing: that they were to be public witnesses proclaiming repentance and forgiveness.

It's important for us to know that it really does all fit together. The Old Testament to the New are all one overreaching epic: one big, wonderful story. At first glance, it seems like a bunch of disconnected stories, but the individual stories on the pages really are connected, entwined to communicate one big story: the story of God's redemption. It's a love story about God's persistent, gracious act of love for His world. It's a human story also about humanity's sinfulness and its need to be rescued. I know it's tempting to skip the Old Testament, but you really do need it to understand the story. The Old Testament actually sets up the New Testament story. It's like, say, you're going to a theater production and you're late and you walk into the middle of a play and you've missed the first act. It really is hard to understand and fully appreciate the play, isn't it? Likewise, in the Bible. So Jesus took the time to walk them to the whole Old Testament: the law of Moses, which is the first five books of the Old Testament, and the prophets, beginning with Joshua judges all the way through the prophetic writings. And then He showed them things from the Psalms that were referred to as the writings.

The story begins in Genesis. God created the world for Himself. The world is perfect and people loved God loved each other. Then came the fall of Adam and Eve. Sin and rebellion happened against God. It all came apart. God went to work to restore his broken world. His plan went into action with the calling of Abraham and Sarah to leave their home and go to Canaan with a promise of land and many descendants, actually a nation, who would be a blessing to all the families of the Earth. As the story plays out, Abraham's descendants wind up in Egypt because of a severe famine, and they eventually find themselves in bondage as slaves in that land. They cry to God for help. God remembered His promises to Abraham and He answered their prayers. He sent a man named Moses to lead them back to the promised land. God's power defeats the Egyptians, and the Israelites are set free. He establishes another covenant with them at Mount Sinai, saying, "I'm your God, I will take care of you. You trust and worship only me and keep my commandments." And then he led them back to the promised land, but it took them 40 years because they were sinful – they had to learn to trust God alone for everything. They were very slow learners. God still had plans for them and He didn't forsake them, even in all of that.

They entered the promised land under Joshua's leadership and God led them into battle against the peoples who were living there, and He gave them the land. But as they settled in, they almost immediately began worshipping the false gods of the area. And God punished them by letting their enemies come in and take over. They'd cry to God for help, and God would graciously send a leader, a judge, to rescue them from their enemies and restore them again to the land. Then he gave them kings to lead them, as they requested: Saul and David and Solomon, and a whole long list of descendants of David who would always fall short. God even made a covenant with King David that his descendants would rule forever over Israel. But then came more rebellion, more idolatry and disobedience and worshipping false deities and oppressing the poor and injustice and immorality; and it was a very spiritually dark time for Israel. Yet God, through all of this, stayed faithful to them because He still had His salvation plan for the world. He sent spokesmen, who were called prophets, whose job was to bring the word of God to His people and point out the error of their ways – telling them to turn back to God. The prophets said judgment and punishments are coming if you don't, but they refused to listen. And judgment came. The prophets also brought the bigger picture to them, a promising future from God of rescue, from exile and being re-established as a nation in the promised land with a king.

Then came the exile of the people to a foreign land, which God made happen. Things look bad for Israel, but God still had His plan. After a period of time, He rescued His people from the Babylonian exile, brought them back to the promised land. But now they're under foreign powers like the Persians and the Greeks and the Romans, with no king. God's prophets would continue to preach obedience and promises of a brighter future with a Messiah king coming that would come and save them and rule over them and the nations. And they waited and they waited for this king, this savior. And the risen Jesus Christ, standing before the disciples that day on Easter, points to Himself and says to His disciples,

And I'm the one. I'm the fulfillment of all of that: of the law, the prophets, and the Psalms. It all points to me. My death and resurrection confirm it." God has been faithful to this world from the beginning and will continue to be faithful to the very end, He's in control. Trust in God. Trust in me.

Now, as Jesus took them to that redemption story through all the books of the Bible, I'm sure He pointed some things out to them. He probably taught them that, one: He's God's promised seed of Eve that would bruise the serpent's head, talked about in Genesis 3. And that He's the promised blessing to all the nations in Genesis 12; that he's the one greater than Moses and the Passover Lamb in Exodus. He's the sacrificial scapegoat for the people's sins in Leviticus, and that all the rituals and sacrifices begun in the wilderness and later on in the Jerusalem temple for forgiveness were only a foretaste of Him. And we're now fulfilled, once and for all, in His sacrifice at the cross. Perhaps He even pointed out to them that He's the serpent on the pole that brings healing to the people in the book of Numbers, and the perfect prophet of God that Moses promised in Deuteronomy. Perhaps He also told them that He's the one the prophets spoke about in longing anticipation of better days; that He's the Messiah from David's line that had been promised to Israel. He's Isaiah's "Emmanuel suffering servant, Prince of peace." He's Jeremiah's branch of righteousness, Ezequiel's plant of renown, giving shade, and on and on. He Zachariah's King over all the Earth, Malachi's Son of righteousness. And in the Psalms He's the Son begotten of the Father in Psalm 2, the forsaken one in Psalm 22, suffering for the sins of the world. He's the cornerstone the builders rejected in Psalm 118. You see, the whole Old Testament is filled with Him. He's in every book and He's the fulfillment of God's rescue plans, the promises to save His world.

Just imagine, if you can, what it must have been like for those disciples to sit in on Jesus' Bible study that day. The light bulbs had to have been going off in those disciples' heads as Jesus taught them this epic story of God at work to save His world from sin. What hope, what faith must have filled their hearts as they listened to Jesus talk of the faithfulness of God to His promises, that God's behind all of this, in control, the power of God, the gracious love of God, the ultimate sovereignty of God, that the future is in His hands and ultimately belongs to Him – that history is moving towards a final, glorious day with Him. Imagine their surprise and wonder, hearing Him tell them that they have been privileged eyewitnesses to the whole thing, everything that the prophets had been wanting to see for themselves, and that God had a plan for them. He would send His Holy Spirit to them and empower them to effectively tell everyone else this story. So no wonder they ran back to Jerusalem with joyous and confident smiles on their faces, publicly worshipping and blessing God in the Jerusalem temple, because now they had the big picture. They understood. Just imagine experiencing all that: the risen Christ, learning the big story, the confidence and hope as they considered the present and the future. The thing is, friend, you don't have to just imagine that scene, you can experience it in your own life. Easter can happen in your life, that same risen Christ is with us now and always, to the end of the age.

I said there were two things Jesus wanted to communicate that day, did you notice that the other thing we see in this episode is Jesus bending over backwards to communicate to His disciples the truth that He really is alive and present with them. He shows them His hands and His feet. He eats in front of them as proof of that. In all His resurrection appearances, in fact, Jesus seemed to be establishing the truth that He would always be present. To not only walk alongside His disciples through the ups and downs of life. But also to meet with us and instruct us with His holy word. I like the way Professor Luke Johnson puts this truth in his book, *Living Jesus*. He writes, "Jesus is not simply a figure of the past, but a person in the present; not merely a memory that we can analyze and manipulate, but an agent who can confront and instruct us. What we learn about Him must therefore include what we continue to learn from Him." And we learn that in scripture.

People have asked me over the years, "Do you mean to tell me that I can really know Jesus personally – the one who walked the roads of Galilee?" And the answer to that question is absolutely yes. Here's how: first notice He's talking to disciples. Are you His disciple? You can be. It begins with asking Him into your life to take over every area of

your life, and then you can really get to know Him personally. He's not hiding from you. And though we cannot see Him face to face, as those disciples did, He's ready to teach us in the pages of scripture through the working of His Holy Spirit. He's ascended, meaning He's the exalted Lord and He's not limited by space and time any longer. He truly will be with us, working through us and in us to conform us to His loving image. He's present. As you reverently open your Bible and seek Him in scripture, you can experience His loving presence. He will meet you there. You need only to approach Him, humbly desiring to learn from Him, to be his disciple. If you ask Him to teach you and open your eyes to God's truth, He will. There's so much He wants to share with you so that your faith can be strong and you can walk in His footsteps and be a powerful witness in a world that needs Him.

In fact, the teacher is eagerly waiting for you to do just that; whether it be in your personal quiet time reading, or taking a Bible class, or in worship, or a small group Bible study, or listening to our Daily Dose podcast each day. He will meet you there and open your eyes to God's grace and truth and help you to grow closer to Him and build you up. He has so much to show you about yourself and about our great God and His plans and desires for your life. Your life will be enriched in ways you can't imagine. He is present, ready to meet with you in the pages of your Bible. So go ahead: don't put this off, go to Him. Be a real disciple, meaning a learner. Don't put it off. He'll open your mind, give you a new joy-filled perspective on life, and cause you to marvel with joy at God's greatness, just like those first amazed disciples. It's a matter of, right now, asking Him to help you, committing yourself to this. I invite you to join with me and pray this prayer, repeat after me each one of these lines:

Lord, open my eyes as I daily turn to your word.

I long to know you.

To understand life.

And to be changed.

Amen.