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# Luke 24

Luke 24.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. <sup>2</sup>And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. <sup>3</sup>And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>\*As they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: <sup>5</sup>and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them,

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>saying, ‘The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’”

<sup>8</sup>And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup>and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. <sup>11</sup>And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

<sup>12</sup>Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Right out of the shoot, Luke, like the other Gospel writers, seeks to instill within his readers a sense of wonderment, of amazement, of astonishment, of marvel and bewilderment. Their message is no ordinary message. The Man about whom they write is no ordinary man.

Amazingly, an elderly couple, barren even in their prime, are to have a baby; a boy who will prepare the way for Messiah.

A crowd, awaiting Zachariah’s exit from the temple and the pronouncement of the priestly blessing, “*marvelled* that he tarried so long.”<sup>1</sup> Angelic visits cannot be rushed.

Family, gathered for a son’s blessing, “*marvel* all”<sup>2</sup> at the choice of name: Yohanan, Yahweh is merciful, a foreshadow of what is to come.

Acquaintances of humble shepherds, who were audience to a choir of angels, “*wondered* at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”<sup>3</sup>

Exploring religious insights with the twelve-year-old Jesus, a group of wizened theologians “were *astonished* at his understanding and answers.” Even his parents “were *amazed*” to find him so occupied.<sup>4</sup>

All that wonder in Luke’s introductory chapters... and before Jesus has even begun his public ministry! Luke wants to be sure that we understand the extraordinary nature of the tale he has to tell. As the opening act in his ministry, Jesus attends his hometown synagogue and reads from the highly regarded

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2.<sup>47-48</sup>

Isaiah. “And all bare him witness, and *wondered* at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”<sup>5</sup>

Soon after, Jesus enters Capernaum’s synagogue. There, worshipers “were *astonished* at his doctrine.” Their astonishment only increased as they witnessed Jesus deliver a man from the enslavement of “an unclean spirit.” “And they were all *amazed*, and spake among themselves, saying, ‘What a word is this!’”<sup>6</sup>

Peter “was *astonished*, and all that were with him” when Jesus produced a “draught of the fishes” after a toilsome but fruitless night of fishing on Lake Galilee.<sup>7</sup>

Later, on that same lake, Jesus’ always bewildered disciples grew even more so as he “rebuked the wind and the raging of the water” until “there was a calm.” “And they being afraid *wondered*, saying one to another, ‘What manner of man is this! For he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.’”<sup>8</sup>

Well, we could keep going, for Luke never lets up. He goes on and on with one amazement, one wonder, one astonishment after another, until, finally, even in dying, Jesus performs the greatest wonder of all. Indeed, even all the wonderful things he has said and done during his unparalleled ministry don’t, can’t prepare us for the wonder of today’s reading.

Faithful women, seeing that the entrance stone to Jesus’ tomb has been removed, enter Jesus’ tomb but “found not the body of the Lord Jesus.” Then, Luke reports, “they were much *perplexed* thereabout.” What did they think when two men in “shining garments” asked, and then announced, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen”? Whatever other effects this announcement had on the women, it sent them rushing back to the disciples to report their findings. Though the women’s report sent Peter dashing off to repeat the women’s journey to Jesus’ tomb, and allowed him to view the same empty tomb that they had seen, it could not undo the wonder—Peter “*wondering* in himself at that which was come to pass.”

Soon thereafter, Jesus would amaze the disciples by suddenly standing “in the midst of them.” Even then, “they yet believed not for joy, and *wondered*.”<sup>9</sup>

I, for one, can understand all this wonderment, amazement, and even bewilderment. There are times that I find the hugeness of Jesus soul incomprehensible. I marvel that such a great and noble Being would associate with, and that happily and eagerly, with a soul “so proud and rebellious as mine.” Nevertheless, I feel a little bit of what the Psalmist felt when he confessed,

“Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works  
which thou has done,  
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward;  
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:  
if I would declare and speak of them,  
they are more than can be numbered.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 4.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Luke 4.<sup>32-36</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Luke 5.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Luke 8.<sup>22-25</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Luke 24.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 40.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus' resurrection leaves me speechless. I cannot begin to fathom what it means for me, for those I love, and for our future. No doubt, even the reality of it will leave me in wonder, amazement, and astonishment. The Lent and Easter Season is the perfect time to put the wonder back into our lives. It is as good a time as any—but any time is a good time—to read, nay, to conduct a concentrated search of Luke and his fellow Gospel writers in order to more deeply appreciate the wonder that they found in Jesus. It is as good a time as any to “view his wonder,” to close our eyes and open our heart and imagine. Yes, the Lent and Easter Season is as good a time as any to enter Jesus' world of wonder and amazement and let the wonder of him fill our heart and mind and soul to overflowing.

So, have a happy and blessed Easter!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 21, 2024)*

<sup>13</sup>And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. <sup>14</sup>And they talked together of all these things which had happened. <sup>15</sup>\*While they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. <sup>16</sup>But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. <sup>17</sup>And he said unto them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

<sup>18</sup>And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass therein these days?"

<sup>19</sup>And he said unto them, "What things?"

And they said unto him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: <sup>20</sup>and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. <sup>22</sup>Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; <sup>23</sup>and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not."

"But we anticipated that he was on the verge of redeeming Israel." These words, uttered by two of Jesus' disciples, are painful to read. It is almost impossible to imagine the optimism, the hopes and dreams about the future that Jesus instilled in his closest disciples while he ministered day in and day out among them. We can permit them such optimism when we consider Jesus' incomparable character. We cannot commend their optimism when it was so often based on false hopes and dreams.

The Gospel writers give us insights into the glorious future that the disciples anticipated. We see that future, for example, at the time of Jesus' first warning concerning his looming rejection, arrest, and death. So impossible did this seem to Peter that he "rebuked," yes "rebuked" Jesus! Imagine that! Imagine just how sure and hopeful Peter must have been about the future that he could feel justified in and empowered to rebuke the Son of God! Later, at Jesus' arrest, Peter was so sure of Jesus', and thus his own, invincibility that he took up the sword to protect Jesus. Peter was ready not only to take on the small Jewish force sent to arrest Jesus, but the entire military might of the Roman Empire!

So, our heart breaks for these men when we hear their lament: "But we had anticipated that he was on the verge of redeeming Israel." I don't know what you hear in these lamenting words, but this is what I hear

"But..."

Translation: "Things, apparently, were not what we thought them to be."

"But we anticipated..."

Translation: "That was then, this is now. Our expectations have been shattered."

"But we anticipated that he was on the verge..."

Translation: "But now we see that he was not on the verge of anything."

"But we anticipated that he was on the verge of redeeming Israel."

Translation: "We now see that Israel is not to be redeemed."

Tell me that that is not heartbreaking. Now, it is true that their “expectations” were faulty. It is true that as they walked this road to Emmaus, they continued to do as they had always done: misunderstand Jesus. But, we can forgive them their false expectations and their misunderstanding. We can certainly forgive them the heartbreak they felt and their lack of faithful endurance. They did not, after all, have the advantage that we have today. The advantage of hindsight. And what an advantage it is that we have! What lessons they have to teach us.

Lesson #1. We can expect dark times of fear and doubt. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you,”<sup>1</sup> for “such... is common to man.”<sup>2</sup>

Lesson #2. Learn to manage your expectations. Be sure that you do not base your expectations on the world’s twisted and perverted values, interests, character, will, and intentions. Rather, be sure that expectations are based upon God, his character, his will, and his intentions: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.”<sup>3</sup>

Lesson #3. Never, ever give up on Jesus. Not even at the last minute. Not even *in* the last minute. Not even *after* the last minute. He can and often does surpass even our wildest *godly, truth-based* expectations. He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”<sup>4</sup>

Lesson #4. Stay alert to and accepting of the new truths and gentle corrections that so often come from Jesus. Though this lesson comes from a future reading from Luke 24, we can benefit from it today. Such “softness” has rarely been in vogue in a world with its perverted ideas of what constitutes “greatness” and “power.” It seems even less so today than ever before. It will often require God’s assistance to acquire and maintain such softness. Lehi had shattered every expectation his family ever had, and had disrupted everything they had ever believed. Thus was Nephi under necessity of divine assistance. “I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the worlds which had been spoken by my father.”<sup>5</sup>

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Petet 4.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Corinthians 10.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 3.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 1 Nephi 2.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Then he said unto them, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:  
<sup>26</sup>ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup>And beginning at  
Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning  
himself.

When we hear the question that Jesus posed to his two depressed disciples who traveled the road to Emmaus—“ought not Christ to have suffered these things?”—and witness him, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets,” expound “unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,” we immediately begin to compile a list of Old Testament scriptures that seem to us “predictive” and “futuristic.” We think, for example, of Psalm 22, the first line of which Jesus prayed from his cross—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—and portions of which the Gospel writers seem to utilize as part of their passion narratives.

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn:  
they shoot out the lip,  
they shake the head, saying,  
‘He trusted on the LORD  
that he would deliver him:  
let him deliver him,  
seeing he delighted in him.’”<sup>1</sup>

“For dogs have compassed me:  
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:  
they pierced my hands and my feet.  
I may tell all my bones:  
they look and stare upon me.  
They part my garments among them,  
and cast lots upon my vesture.”<sup>2</sup>

We think of Isaiah’s insight into a servant of God who is made a scapegoat by a population unappreciative of him or his message.

“He has no appeal,  
does not impress.  
Though we look upon him,  
we simply find nothing praiseworthy about him.  
He is a worthless fellow,  
dismissed by everyone,  
a man mentally unstable through sin,  
familiar with defilement,  
and, as a man too ashamed to look others in the eye, he is thought contemptible.  
He is simply not worthy of our respect.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 22.<sup>7-8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 22.<sup>16-18</sup>

But, in fact, it is our sickness not his own that he bears;  
he bears up under the burden of our, not his, derangement  
while we consider him struck,  
violently beaten by God.

But, it is our outrageous behaviors that wound him;  
he takes a pounding as a result of our wrongs—  
[our belief] that the fix that brings wellbeing to the rest of us rests upon him,  
and through the blows inflicted upon him we will find healing.”<sup>3</sup>

Even if one accepts that such “futuristic” passages, relatively rare, refer prophetically to Jesus and his passion, they do not even begin to scratch the surface of an Old Testament God who suffers pain and hurt at the hands of his people. Indeed, if one believes that Jesus is “God,” and more specifically, the Old Testament God, “Yahweh,” then one is faced with a suffering, hurt, and wounded God in nearly every verse of the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps I should explain. We are not far into the Book, a mere six chapters in fact, before we come face to face with a God in pain.

“When YHWH saw that humanity’s depravity was great the world over, and that every dispositional calculation formed was only depraved all the time, YHWH felt sorrow at having made man upon the earth, and was deeply distressed.”<sup>4</sup>

With the ensuing flood, we all too often see a God in a rage, lashing out at rebellious subjects. However, Joseph Smith’s imaginative reading of Genesis that is found in the Book of Moses is even clearer about a God who is in pain not rage.

“The God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: ‘How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?’ And Enoch said unto the Lord: ‘How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?... how is it thou canst weep?’

“The Lord said unto Enoch: ‘Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands...’”<sup>5</sup>

Here, then, we find the divine Jesus in pain. Why the surprise that he should experience pain and rejection while tabernacled in a body of clay? People in first century AD Judah were not much different than people in the pre-diluvian era. Indeed, first century A.D. Judeans inflicted the same sort of painful rejection upon Jesus that their ancestors had when he was known as Yahweh. From the moment they met, the relationship between Israel and Yahweh was fraught with misunderstanding and conflict. Divine hurt and pain were consequences of God’s commitment to his people. Jeremiah passionately and understandably mouthed Yahweh’s pain as Judah neared the end of its existence as a free and independent nation.

“For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt;  
I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.  
Is there no balm in Gilead;  
is there no physician there?  
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people  
recovered?”

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 53.<sup>2-5</sup>, author’s translation

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 6.<sup>5-6</sup>, author’s translation

<sup>5</sup> Moses 7.<sup>28-29, 31-32</sup>



Oh that my head were waters,  
and mine eyes a fountain of tears,  
that I might weep day and night  
for the slain of the daughter of my people!  
Oh that I had in the wilderness  
a lodging place of wayfaring men;  
that I might leave my people,  
and go from them!”<sup>6</sup>

It was another, unknown, Old Testament prophet, Zenos by name, who expressed with such pathos the hurt and pain Yahweh suffers near constantly because of his unrelenting commitment to his children.

“The Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant: ‘What could I have done more for my vineyard?’”<sup>7</sup>

Well, we could go on. And on. And on. There is hardly a verse anywhere in scripture, from Genesis 1 to DC 138 and beyond, in which God’s children did not and do not inflict pain and hurt upon him. His love and commitment to us, his children, can, at times, it seems, become almost a burden.

“Behold, I am pressed under you,  
as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”<sup>8</sup>

It is truly amazing, a wonder, how long God patiently endured Israel’s and then Judah’s continual abuse. It is a wonder, *the* wonder of the world, of the universe, that God continues to patiently endure the abuse we heap upon him to this day. It is more than ample proof of the Psalmist’s testimony

“The LORD is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.  
He will not always chide:  
neither will he keep his anger for ever.  
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;  
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.  
For as the heaven is high above the earth,  
so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.”<sup>9</sup>

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 21, 2024)*

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<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 8.<sup>21-9.2</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jacob 5.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Amos 2.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 103.<sup>8-11</sup>

<sup>28</sup>And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. <sup>29</sup>But they constrained him, saying, “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.”

<sup>30\*</sup>As he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. <sup>31</sup>And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. <sup>32</sup>And they said one to another, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

I confess that I tend to keep myself a little aloof from my ecclesiastical leaders. There is only so much of my heart that I will give them. I simply do not trust them with all of it. No matter how good, and I have had some good leaders, they are not worthy of such trust. I don't mean this as a knock on them. They are, after all, mere men (or women) like me. I've been one of them, and I am not to be trusted with the whole of any human heart.

A few years ago, I enjoyed the leadership of as good an ecclesiastical leader as one could hope for. He was a good man. He lacked no self-confidence but possessed not one bit of arrogant. I appreciated his rare ability to balance these two things. He treated everyone with the utmost respect. Nevertheless, I only allowed his nose so far into my tent, pushing carefully back whenever he tried to enter too far. One day, with a smile on his face, he shook my hand and drew me close. “You're really not very impressed with me, are you? Don't really trust me.”

I *was* impressed by his ability to discern my feelings for and response to him.

“It's nothing personal, President,” I replied. “It's just that, well,” here I pointed a finger upwards, “I've met the man upstairs. After that encounter, nobody much impresses me.”

He smiled with an amused twinkle in his eye, nodded his head, and walked away. We continued to get along just fine, me keeping my distance and he, knowing, understanding, and respecting why. Actually, truth be told, I think he was pleased.

I can be impish. Perhaps that comes out from time to time in my sermons, homilies, and other writings. But, I am deadly serious about this. I have met Jesus. And he is incredible. He is magnetic. I am drawn to him as no one else. I trust him as no one else.

He has had and has now this effect on many. He had this effect on the two disciples who traveled the road to Emmaus. They did not recognize him. Why should they? As far as they were concerned, he was dead. End of story. Truth is, even after spending day after day with him, they never really “recognized” him. Never really understood who and what they were dealing with in Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless, after just a brief encounter on the road, Jesus drew them to himself. After just a brief encounter, and when Jesus made as if to part company with them, they felt a desire, a need for a little more time with this stranger.

“Abide with us.”

Roughly three years earlier, Jesus had had the same effect upon a group of citizens from Capernaum. Jesus had spent the day teaching in the local synagogue. He had healed a man there. He had entered

Peter's house and, there, healed Peter's mother-in-law. He had spent the evening healing individuals with "divers diseases." Then, bright and early the next morning, Jesus "departed and went into a desert place." Seeing that Jesus was planning to leave the city, "the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them."<sup>1</sup>

I understand completely. That is just how I felt. For days. And days. I longed for his presence. More. I wanted more. And it isn't simply about what he did or does, either. It is about him. His character. He possesses such a very, very attractive personality.

Nevertheless, Jesus must be out and about. He must visit as many people as possible. Not long after leaving Capernaum, he found himself in the region of the Gadarenes. Here he met another multitude, this one named Legion. Initially, anyway, this crazed and demonic multitude was not so please to see him. But, Jesus calmed the crazed man and caste out the demonic multitude. He who was once naked, uncontrollable, a threat to all who met him, and a threat to himself<sup>2</sup> was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind."<sup>3</sup>

But, as always, Jesus must be on the move. The local population, having had no meaningful encounter with Jesus, was glad to see him go. But, "the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him."<sup>4</sup> As Jesus so often does, as he must do, he sent the man off, commissioning him to bear witness of his encounter; bear witness to Jesus' magnetic and energizing character. We assume he did.

It was, according to the Book of Mormon chronicler, about a year after Jesus' death<sup>5</sup> when another multitude, this one on the other side of the globe, discovered the same magnetic personality and felt the same unquenchable thirst for Jesus and his presence. This time, the resurrected Jesus had overwhelmed a multitude with his invitation that they "come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet."<sup>6</sup> After thousands had experienced their own private audience with Jesus<sup>7</sup> and, together, had fallen down "at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him,"<sup>8</sup> Jesus spent a full day teaching his "doctrine" to those latest captivated by him.

Hours and hours had passed since his initial appearance. Jesus could discern that people were growing tired. "It's time for me to go," he announced. "You go home and rest. Tomorrow we'll meet again, and I'll teach you more." The chronicler then records this.

"When Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them."<sup>9</sup>

Jesus had not yet healed a single person, at least not physically, as he had in Capernaum or among Gadarenes. Yet, the people were drawn to Jesus. This attraction was and is about more than his ability to heal or his gift and insight as a teacher. It is about him. It is about his personality. He, he is magnificent!

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<sup>1</sup> See Luke 4.<sup>31-42</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Luke 8.<sup>27, 29</sup>; Matthew 8.<sup>28</sup>; Mark 5.2-5

<sup>3</sup> Luke 8.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Luke 8.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See 3 Nephi 8.<sup>5</sup> and 10.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 3 Nephi 11.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 3 Nephi 11.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 3 Nephi 11.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 3 Nephi 17.<sup>5</sup>

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 21, 2024)*

<sup>33</sup>And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, <sup>34</sup>saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”

<sup>35</sup>And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

<sup>36</sup>And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, “Peace be unto you.”

<sup>37</sup>But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. <sup>38</sup>And he said unto them, “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup>Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”

<sup>40</sup>And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup>And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, “Have ye here any meat?”

<sup>42</sup>And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. <sup>43</sup>And he took it, and did eat before them.

In our previous three *meditations* on Luke 24.<sup>13-24</sup>, 24.<sup>25-27</sup>, and 24.<sup>28-32</sup>, we found two of Jesus’ disciples engaged in serious conversation as they traveled to the village of Emmaus within days of Jesus’ crucifixion and death. As they approached the village, the resurrected Jesus, unrecognized by them, “drew near and went with them.” As the three walked together, Jesus queried the disciples over the nature of their conversation.

During their recitation of recent events, especially of Jesus’ death, Jesus felt their sense of confusion, discouragement, and doubt. He responded to their feelings by teaching them that Jesus’ suffering and death were consistent with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible and with the character of its God, Yahweh.

Impressed by his instruction, the disciples pleaded for Jesus, still unknown to them, to “abide” with them for an evening meal. Upon sitting down to eat with them, Jesus “took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.” Then, we are informed, “their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” Upon returning to the other disciples and reporting that they had seen the resurrected Jesus, the two explained that though they had not recognized him for quite some time he was finally “know of them in breaking of bread.”

Two times, then, Luke has reported that the key to the disciples’ recognizing Jesus was to be found in his blessing and braking of bread. He might have repeated other elements of the narrative, but this seems to be the one that Luke wishes the reader to consider. Jesus was recognized in the blessing and breaking of bread. What, then, are we to learn from this? What application might it have to our own understanding and recognition of Jesus and the significant place he holds in our lives?

I don’t know how you answer these questions, but here is just one thing that among many that I have found. Some years ago on a gray and dreary autumn Saturday morning in Michigan, I stood at the back of a chapel awaiting the beginning of a memorial service for a recently departed member of the ward. Clusters of others were scattered about the chapel engaged in fairly mundane, though hushed conversation. The conversations came to an end and the mood grew somber as the deceased’s casket was rolled into the front of the chapel and placed immediately in front of the sacrament table.

After the memorial service, I returned home and gave it little thought. The following morning, I stood in nearly the same place at the back of the chapel as I had the previous day. My eyes went to the front of the chapel where the casket had stood. Of course, the casket was no longer there. But something was there.

Something far more significant. My eyes rested on the “sacrament table” covered by a clean white “tablecloth.” Under the tablecloth, I could see the ridges of each sacrament tray’s raised handle. Except, I did not see a table or a tablecloth or the indications of sacrament tray handles. What I saw that day was a shroud. And under that shroud, I realized, was a body. At one end, I could see a ridge where the deceased toes were raised. At the other end, I could see another ridge, this one the deceased nose. In between, I could see the ridges of several ribs.

As I sat down, I could not keep my eyes off that shroud. I realized, perhaps for the first time, that I was present, not to attend some ordinary “meeting.” I was here to attend a “service.” A memorial service. I was here because someone had died. But, no, someone had not died. Not yet. But someone would die, very soon. And not just anyone. We were about to rebreak the body and re-shed the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We were about to sacrifice, crucify him anew.

We did so, so that our “eyes might be opened.” So that we might better understand him. So that we might recognize him. So that we might know him. And in understanding, and recognizing, and knowing him, we might “always remember him.”

We might remember many things about him. But on this, “the Lord’s day,” through the simplest of ordinances, we remember most that our Great and Holy God is, in his utter dedication to us, a self-sacrificing God who suffered and died.

While we remember that his sacrifice is the greatest of all sacrifices. We are invited to follow him. Imitate him. We are invited to offer our broken heart, so incapable of beating as it should, upon the altar and await the healing and renewing that comes through that great and last and infinite sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are invited to shed our selfish will and allow Jesus to reform our will in the image of his own self-sacrificing will.

Yes, Jesus is recognized as much in his death as in his life. We do worship a living Christ. But we also worship a dying Christ. Every. Single. Week. We worship a dying Christ. Yes, it is in this breaking of his body and this shedding of his blood that our eyes are open to the recognition of who he truly is and of what his greatness consists.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 21, 2024)*

<sup>44</sup>And he said unto them, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

<sup>45</sup>Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and said unto them, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>And ye are witnesses of these things.

<sup>49</sup>And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

While traveling incognito with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Jesus had utilized scripture to offer evidence that his suffering and death—caused by wicked men and their institutions, made possible by Jesus’ unwillingness to exercise his power to save himself, and always a matter of confusion and shame among his disciples—was consistent with scripture and was the means by which he could “enter into his glory.”<sup>1</sup> After the two disciples returned to Jerusalem and gathered with other disciples to report their encounter, Jesus appeared to all of his disciples. Even so, the skepticism that had accompanied each previous report of Jesus’ resurrection continued. Even after Jesus invited them to examine his wounds as proof of his identity, “they yet believed not for joy”—it was just too good to be true. Thus, Jesus repeated with all the disciples the perusal of scripture that he had previously conducted with only the two in order to demonstrate once more that “it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” Perhaps sensing that the disciples were finally beginning to catch a glimpse of the importance of his suffering and death, Jesus took the tutorial one step further:

“Thus it behoved 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 among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”

Here, Jesus’ disciples learn four things, at least as I count them. First, they learn that Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection are intended to draw a response from those who become aware of them. That response is repentance.

Second, they learn that there is a divine response when one responds to Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection with repentance. That response is the remission of sins.

Third, the revelation of Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection, with their accompanying repentance and remission of sins is not meant exclusively for Jewish eyes and ears and hearts only. It is intended for “all nations.”

Fourth, having introduced the first three fundamental truths, Jesus informs his disciples that they are to bear witness of these truths. However, like Hyrum Smith two thousand years later,<sup>2</sup> they required further preparation before setting out on such a world-changing mission.

This is a boatload of information, all reduced to two scriptural sentences! It will require a series of longer

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24.<sup>25-27</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See DC 11.<sup>21-22</sup>

homilies to address each of the truths Jesus teaches in these two sentences. Since this is billed as a *meditation*, our review here will be necessarily brief and limited in scope.

The disciples were not sophisticated theologians. Shoot, who are we kidding, they weren't theologians at all. So, we wonder, at this early stage, what did they make, what *could* they make of Jesus' suffering and death in light of his resurrection? And how did they formulate a "repentance" that drew its inspiration and power from Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection?

Jesus had warned his disciples about his coming rejection, arrest, suffering and death on multiple occasions. One gathers from the record that, in actuality, Jesus never let his disciples forget it. His predicted rejection, suffering, and death looked, to them, like failure, humiliation, and defeat on his part and, attached to him as they were, left them with feelings of personal confusion, anger, and shame. It is certain that when the actuality finally presented itself, these feelings were magnified, combined, as we see in Luke 24, with feelings of discouragement and hopelessness.

But as the reality of Jesus' resurrection slowly dawned on them, they saw that his rejection, suffering, and death were not failures or cause for humiliation after all. Nor was his refusal to exercise his power to preserve himself a sign of weakness. Rather, all of this was preliminary to his victory and glorification. They had, they realized, judged things wrongly. They had judged Jesus by the world's twisted standards of personal worth and power. So, Jesus' victorious resurrection brought a change of mind and caused them to think of things differently—this "change of mind" or "new way of thinking" is the basic idea behind the Greek word, *metanoia*, translated as "repentance."

Personal worth, greatness and power and victory, health and wellbeing and happiness were not what the world preached them to be and were not acquired as the world claimed. Personal worth, greatness and power and victory, health and wellbeing and happiness were not based on dominating. They weren't based on the acquisition of prestige or wealth or more power—false assertions that Jesus himself had rejected from the moment he entered the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil to his final mortal breath.

Rather, personal worth, greatness and power and victory, health and wellbeing and happiness flowed as one rejected the world's twisted views and adopted the views of Jesus, who, in choosing to serve others rather than himself, had simply adopted the views of his Father. They flowed by bending to the will to Jesus and his teachings. They flowed by living a life consistent with Jesus' character, which was simply a reflection of his Father's.

This, then, is what the disciples would preach. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection draws us to repentance by exposing the lies that the world propagates every single day of our lives—about personal worth, greatness and power and victory, health and wellbeing and happiness; about the very standards by which the value of a life is measured. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection allows us to view things through new eyes.

With our rejection of the old and our perception of the new, not only do our attitudes change, but our behavior changes. As our behavior changes, sins are remitted—"let go," "hurled off." This "remission of sins" is still dependent upon God. It continues to be a matter of grace. It cannot be "earned." But, it is less about some magical divine eraser wielded by God and angels, and more about the fact that, through the grace of God's revelation through Jesus, we see sin for what it is—something we could not otherwise do—and, with his aid, reject it. We reject that which the world defines as personal worth, greatness and power and victory, health and wellbeing and happiness, along with the very standards by which the value of a life is measured. We accept and live by Jesus' ideals of personal worth, greatness and power and victory, health and wellbeing and happiness, and the very standards by which the value of a life is measured.



The reader can see, then, that the message of “repentance and the remission of sins,” is something much more than stopping bad, even evil habits. It is the rejection of a complete world view and the adoption of the divine view of existence itself. It is the adoption of Jesus’ view and a striving to live as he lived. Serving as he lived. And, maybe, even dying as he died. It is to reject false ideals of personal worth for true ideals of personal worth; to reject false greatness for true greatness, false power for real power, false victory for real victory, false health and wellbeing for real health and wellbeing, false happiness for real happiness, and false notions that measure the value of life for real.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 21, 2024)*

<sup>50</sup>And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: <sup>53</sup>And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Addressing the confusion and discouragement over his death that the two disciples who were traveling to Emmaus possessed, Jesus asked, “ought not Christ to have suffered these things?”<sup>1</sup> Upon appearing to all his gathered disciples and finding them similarly confused and discouraged, Jesus asserted that “it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”<sup>2</sup> Soon thereafter, Jesus ascended into heaven. Though he did not, he might have said “it behoved Christ to ascend into heaven and be enthroned on the right hand of God.” Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection were essential and necessary aspects of his atonement. But even with his resurrection, all essential and necessary aspects of his atonement were not yet complete. These, without his ascension to and enthronement in heaven, would have been incomplete and unfinished.

We should, then, understand today’s reading, with its narrative of Jesus’ ascension, as one central to his atonement. Jesus and his first disciples seemed to have had this view. When Jewish leaders interrogated Jesus as to his identity, Luke records Jesus’ response: “Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.”<sup>3</sup> In the first recorded public address made by any disciple, Peter witnessed that “God raised up” Jesus and that he was “therefore... by the right hand of God exalted.”<sup>4</sup> An early and influential church leader, Stephen, bore witness at his execution that he saw “the heavens open, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”<sup>5</sup> The apostle Paul, who participated in Stephen’s execution, later testified that Jesus had been raised from the dead and “sitteth on the right hand of God.”<sup>6</sup> The writer of Hebrews bore witness that Jesus, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”<sup>7</sup> The same author summarizes one of his main points with, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”<sup>8</sup>

“What,” one might ask, “does Jesus do at and from that privileged place?” Early church leaders have ready answers.

Jesus, Peter announces, “is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; *angels and authorities and powers made subject unto him.*”<sup>9</sup> We need not, then, fear any authority or any power for any reason. Paul prays that the saints in Ephesus would come to understand and appreciate “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he [God] wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and *set him at his own right hand in the*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Luke 22.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Acts 2.<sup>32-33</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Acts. 7.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Colossians 3.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 12.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 8.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 3.<sup>22</sup>

*heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name* that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet...<sup>10</sup> Thus, Paul assures the saints of Rome that they need not worry about being condemned or overcome in any fashion by anyone or anything because “Christ that died, ye rather, that is risen again... is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession for us.*”<sup>11</sup>

Jesus stands between us and any opposing angels, authorities, principalities, powers, might, or dominions, thus protecting us from their threats. We sometimes read things such as the following and imagine that in making intercession, Jesus somehow protects us from and makes us acceptable to Heavenly Father, allays his wounded honor, or satisfies his demanding justice.

“I am Christ, and in mine own name, by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them.”<sup>12</sup>

But this, I think is wrong. Jesus does not protect us from Father, or his wounded honor, or his demand for justice because there is no need to do so. He does defend us against Father’s accusations, because Father makes no such accusations. Such accusations come from the fallen angel, Lucifer. No, the Father feels about us, as Jesus does. Jesus does not stand between us and Father. He stands with Father, and together, they stand with us. They stand with us against every angel and all authorities, principalities, powers, might, or dominions. Few examples of Jesus’ in his intercessory role are more exemplary, powerful, or touching than that found in 3 Nephi.

“Jesus groaned within himself, and said: ‘Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel.’ And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.

And after this manner do they bear record: ‘The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; and no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.’

When Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome.”<sup>13</sup>

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 21, 2024)*

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<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 1.<sup>19-22</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Romans 8.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>12</sup> DC 38.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 3 Nephi 17.<sup>14-18</sup>