

2. John made no mention of the Emmaus episode, but instead focused on Jesus' appearances to the Eleven. Mark and Luke both indicate that the Emmaus appearance preceded Jesus' first appearance to His apostles, which Luke and John say occurred the evening of that same day – i.e., the first day following Jesus' resurrection. If the Lucan and Johannine accounts refer to the same appearance, then the two Emmaus disciples were also present, though John chose to focus on Jesus' interaction with the Eleven.

Like Luke, John located this appearance in a room in Jerusalem, but added that the inhabitants had secured the doors out of fear of the Jews (20:19). He didn't explain their fear, but almost certainly it reflected two concerns. First, they must have worried that Jesus' fate might await them. The Jewish rulers were committed to eradicating Jesus' teaching and influence and His disciples were an impediment to that goal; they could keep this messianic movement alive. Even more, the empty tomb pointed the finger at them; the disciples realized that they'd be blamed for the disappearance of Jesus' body and accused of taking it for the purpose of claiming that He was raised from the dead. They knew that this was precisely what the rulers hoped to avoid by posting a guard at the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). And now that the word on the street was that Jesus' body had been stolen (Matthew 28:11-15), the disciples understood that their arrest was the best way for the Jews to legitimize this story.

- a. As the group was marveling at the news of Jesus' appearances, John recorded that He suddenly stood in their midst (cf. 20:26) and greeted them with the words, "Peace to you" (20:19b). This was a common Hebrew greeting, but in this setting it clearly carried unique and profound significance. *Peace* renders the Hebrew term *shalom*, but the latter has a much deeper and richer connotation than its English equivalent. Within its scriptural context, *shalom* is a creational and relational concept that embodies the ideas of wholeness, harmony and flourishing. *Shalom* is what characterizes a thing when it is fully conformed to its created nature and purpose; *shalom* defines God's creation as He intended it – not just in itself, but in relation to Him. Cornelius' Plantinga's comments are helpful:

*"The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call **shalom**. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight."*

Jews issued this greeting to one another as expressing their desire and hope that their fellow Israelite would experience this form and manner of life. In this instance Jesus didn't mean less than this, but He meant much more. For the *shalom* which Jews wished for themselves and for one another was ultimately to be realized in the restoration Yahweh promised in connection with His Messiah. Apart from that divine intervention, Israel had no legitimate hope of such "peace." The prophets spoke in this way (Isaiah 9:1-7, 32:1-20, 52:1-54:17; Jeremiah 6:1-14, 33:1-16; Ezekiel 37:1-28; Micah 5:1-5; Haggai 2:1-23; Zechariah 6:9-13, 8:1-23, 9:9-10; cf. also Luke 1:67-79, 2:1-14, 25-32) and so did Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 10:5-13; Luke 10:1-11, 19:41-44; ref. esp. John 14:25-27, 16:32-33).

Israel's hope of *shalom* was bound up in the messianic person and work and now the resurrected Messiah was declaring to His Israelite disciples that that hope had at last been realized. The greeting of peace was no longer prospective; in Jesus it was now "yea and amen"; it was now "*peace is yours.*"

- b. In the shock of the moment Jesus' disciples likely didn't hear His words because their minds were preoccupied with trying to process what they were experiencing. Their faces told the story and Jesus reached out His hands and exposed His side to convince them that it really was Him "in the flesh" and not a vision (v. 20). The circumstances of Jesus' appearance were startling enough (how could He just appear in a locked room?), but there was another reason for the disciples' astonishment: The Jewish people (other than the Sadducees and their followers) believed in bodily resurrection, but they were taught to expect it at the end of the age as the prelude to the *Olam Ha-Ba* (the coming age). Moreover, all of Yahweh's faithful – Messiah included – would experience resurrection together. But here was Jesus apparently resurrected in the middle of the present age and as a solitary event. Given their understanding, it was far easier for the disciples to believe they were witnessing an apparition than their Lord's resurrection.
- c. Having convinced His disciples that He was indeed resurrected from the dead, Jesus reissued His greeting, this time explaining to them the implication of the new reality embodied in that greeting: *His Father had sent Him as the Prince of Peace to bring peace to the world, but this goal was to be fully realized through those who share in His life and His peace* (20:21, cf. again 14:25-27).

Jesus' resurrection meant that the promised shalomic age had dawned, but the Father's design was that His peace, now established by His Son, would flood the world through the witness of His disciples. But most importantly, this witness was not going to be *their* testimony on His behalf, but *His* testimony in and through them. The glorified Son was going to bring His peace to the world of men, but by His presence and manifest power in His own. And He'd accomplish this by the outpoured Spirit; animated and led by His Spirit, the words and works of Jesus' disciples would be His own (cf. Matthew 10:16-20; Acts 3:1-16).

Jesus had explained these things to the Eleven during their final Passover meal (ref. again 14:12-27, 15:26-16:15) and now He reaffirmed them by the symbolic act of breathing on the assembled disciples (20:22). This symbolism may seem strange to the contemporary reader, but it wouldn't have to those present in the room. They recognized the close connection between *breath* and *Spirit*, both in terms of language and imagery. The same Hebrew noun alternatively denotes spirit, breath and wind and the Greek New Testament parallels this pattern with the noun *pneuma*. So the Scriptures highlight and develop the correspondence of these ideas through various images – images that characteristically pertain to the subject of *life* as imparted by the living God through the operation of His Spirit (cf. Genesis 1:1-2, 2:7, 7:20-22; Job 27:1-4, 32:7-8, 34:10-15; Isaiah 42:5, 57:15-16; Ezekiel 37:1-14; cf. also Luke 23:46; John 3:1-8; Acts 1:8 with 2:1-4).

- d. By this action of breathing on the disciples Jesus was only *symbolizing* His giving of the Spirit. The actual endowment of the Spirit awaited His final ascension to the Father and the day of Pentecost (ref. again Acts 1:8, 2:1ff). The reason Jesus performed this symbolic action at this time is that it underscored the nature and resource of the disciples' commission. Jesus' Spirit would enable and equip them for their mission of making Him known to the world – not by *their* words and works, but by *His* manifested in and through them. The disciples were to become *apostles* – “sent ones” – and the Spirit was vital to them fulfilling their calling to be the glorified Messiah's truth, presence and power in the world.

Jesus was going to accomplish His mission through witnesses who share in His life and mind by His Spirit, but this meant that He would exercise His authority as the enthroned Lord through them. God alone has ultimate authority over men, epitomized in His prerogative to forgive their sin. He's invested this authority in the Son (Mark 2:1-11; cf. John 5:22-23) and the Son has entrusted it to His ambassadors – not to become an authority in their own right, but to administer *His* according to His mind and intent (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Son is the seed of Abraham who brings God's blessing to all the earth's families, but He would fulfill His calling through disciples enlivened, illumined and empowered by His Spirit. They would go out into the world speaking His words, performing His works and exercising His authority such that men would come to know *Him*, not them (cf. Matthew 10:40; John 13:20, 15:18-27; cf. also 1 Corinthians 7:10-40; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13).

This dynamic of witness and representation in the Spirit is the premise behind Jesus' statement concerning the forgiveness and retention of sins (20:23); it was *after* He breathed on them that Jesus declared their authority to forgive or retain sins. He was going to breathe out His Spirit upon them and then they would have both the mind and the prerogative to exercise His judgment concerning the forgiveness of sin. Two things about this are especially important to note:

- 1) The first is that the apostles' judgment was to be His judgment, predicated again on sharing His mind and authority by the Spirit. They would “bind” (retain) and “loose” (forgive) only as attesting and implementing His binding and loosing as the enthroned Lord over all creation: *Whatever you bind or loose **on the earth** will be (i.e., will stand), having already been bound or loosed **in heaven*** (ref. Matthew 16:19, 18:18-20).
- 2) Secondly, Jesus was granting this prerogative to His *apostles*. However, it continues beyond the apostles in connection with the apostolic doctrine as embodied in the Scriptures. Christians, however godly and sincere, have no right to judge others. They do, however, have the *obligation* to apply Christ's judgment as revealed in the Scriptures and discerned through the Spirit. And Christ's lordship brings all men into judgment, unbelievers and believers alike (cf. Acts 17:22-31; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 11:26-32).