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## The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-32

In June of 2022 an article was published by Claire Toureille titled, “No One Suspected He Was Suffering.” Essentially it referenced the incredible struggles and burdens that we daily live under which at times suffocate or crush an individual. It also referenced the tendency for some feeling so crushed to smile and act as if nothing were wrong. (Toureille, 2022)

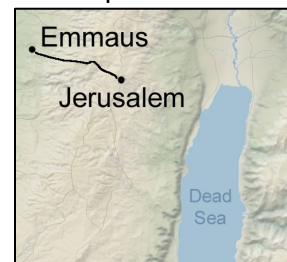
Yet this is not a new problem. Close to 3,000 years ago now, a king named Solomon penned these words:

Proverbs 14:13: “Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief.”

Luke 24 speaks to all of us, BUT especially to those whose “joy” and “laughter” is a cover for their depression and grief. For God has addressed your situation! At another time and in another place, there were some who spent Easter much like many today—void of joy and in much pain. They were defeated and quite hopeless. They were travelling “The Road to Emmaus.”

Luke 24:13-14, “And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place”

These verses intimately link this account to the resurrection of Christ with the words “that very day” — the day Christ rose from the dead (an event these disciples were not aware of). Now, as the disciples walked together, they shared their heartache, confusion, and grief over the crucifixion. It was with this state of mind these disciples walked the Road to Emmaus.



And what is this road? Though in the days of Christ it was a literal road that led from Jerusalem to the small town of Emmaus, AND though it was traversed in our text by two followers of Christ who were in despair, NEVERTHELESS it is a road frequented by all who upon their shoulders lay a massive weight of sadness and depression.

We begin by noting that the road to Emmaus is a human experience shared by all. Notice its first characteristic: It is marked by sadness.

Luke 24:15, “And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing [no doubt their failed hopes and crushed dreams on account of the crucifixion], Jesus Himself approached [drew near], and began travelling with them.”

As the disciples walked on the road, Christ overtook them and began walking with them.

Luke 24:16, “But their eyes were prevented [or kept] from recognizing Him.”

It could have been that Jesus took on a completely different appearance than when He walked the earth (as in Mark 16:12), or it could just be that God blinded the eyes of these disciples (as in John 20:14; 21:4). Nevertheless, these disciples did NOT recognize this apparent stranger as their beloved Lord and Savior. Furthermore, there no doubt were many travelling the road, hastening back to their homes after the Jewish Passover celebration. In this regard, Jesus would have been understood as one of these people.

Luke 24:17a, "And He [Jesus] said to them, 'What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?' ..."

Understand, Christ did NOT ask this because He lacked information. RATHER, He posed this question in order to arouse their interest.

Luke 24:17b, "...and they stood still, looking sad."

The question, so unbelievable since the crucifixion of Christ apparently was the talk of the region, made the disciples stop. And as they stood there, their true demeanor was seen.

To "look sad" is to be gloomy, sullen, depressed, or downcast. It is the reaction of one who frowns deeply. The expression is used in Proverbs 15:13 of a "broken spirit." The truth of Jesus' death took these disciples to a very low point- a point of hopelessness, gloom, and mourning.

From this we see that the Christian life is NOT a path of ease. As much as we love God, there are times when we will find ourselves on a path of mourning, sorrow, and grief- that's the Road to Emmaus. Yet it doesn't stop here. It is marked by disappointment.

### [It is Marked by Disappointment, vv. 18-21a.](#)

Luke 24:18, "And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?'"

The tone of this question verges on sarcasm, "*You've got to be kidding! Everyone knows what happened in Jerusalem and you don't?*"

Luke 24:19a, "And He said to them, 'What things?' ..."

With marvelous tact, Jesus gave these disciples full opportunity to unburden themselves.

Luke 24:19b-21a, "...And they said to Him, 'The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.' But we were hoping [lit., 'had hoped'] that it was He who was going to redeem Israel..."

This is NOT a reference to the saving work of Christ. RATHER, it reflects the prevailing view of many in Christ's day that the Messiah would be a military leader who would

conquer Rome, save His people, and thus redeem Israel from their oppression (cf. Luke 1:68; 2:38; 21:28). In light of this, you can just imagine the DISAPPOINTMENT that these two disciples felt!

“Were hoping” is in the past tense. It is something that they *USED* to do. From the perspective of these disciples, far from being the Messiah, Jesus turned out to be no different from many other Jewish leaders who rallied the Jews to rebel against Rome, and yet who ultimately were shown to be FALSE Messiah’s!

With this Luke portrays the disappointment of the disciples. Just one week prior, it appeared that the Messiah had finally arrived with Christ’s Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21). Yet now, it is clear that Christ was NOT what they thought He was!

And once again, that is what the Road to Emmaus is all about. NOT ONLY is it associated with sadness, BUT it also is characterized by disappointment. And yet there is another characteristic: It is marked by confusion.

### [It is Marked by Confusion, vv. 21b-24.](#)

Luke 24:21b, “...Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.”

This is an important reference. You will recall that Christ Himself predicted that following His death He would rise again on the third day.

Matthew 16:21, “From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”

These two disciples referenced this with a hope and anticipation shrouded in CONFUSION — for notice what they said.

Luke 24:22-23, “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive!”

This was the *WOMEN’S CLAIM*, BUT it was hardly credible. For, if Christ rose from the dead, would it NOT be expected that the announcement would first be given to His disciples?

In addition, the legal system at this time disqualified women from serving as witnesses. And thus, the report of the women at this time would NOT have been taken as credible.

Listen to the disciples response to the women's testimony:

Luke 24:11, "And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them."

And yet, to make matters even more confusing, there had been some interesting reports coming from some of the disciples.

Luke 24:24, "And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

This is in reference to Peter and John who ran to the tomb, found it emptied, BUT did NOT find Christ's body (cf. John 20:1-10).

And so, not only is the road to Emmaus associated with sadness and disappointment. BUT it is also characterized by confusion: "*Some say this. Others say that. And we don't know what to believe.*" William Hendriksen described it in these terms:

Their Master ... gone. Their friend- and what a Friend!- departed. Their plans wrecked. Their hopes shattered. They are perplexed, baffled. [And so] they despair. (Hendrikson, 1978, p. 1063)

The road to Emmaus. Have you been there? Though 2000 years separate us from the crucifixion of Christ, life many times brings us to this road!

- Ruined dreams.
- Broken hearts.
- Pain and suffering.
- Unanswered prayers.
- Tragedy and great disappointment!

Such is the pain and difficulties that accompany life in this world.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, let me encourage you! In the midst of this human experience there is hope! God has provided a solution that is available to all who traverse this difficult road. For there is a divine solution to man's problem.

[The Divine Solution, vv. 25-32.](#)

It is immediately addressed by understanding the message of the word of God.

Luke 24: 25-26, "And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ

to suffer these things and to enter into His glory”

This reveals the first of the disciple’s problems. It was NOT...

- Their circumstances.
- The evil days in which they lived.
- The Romans.
- Or even the death of Christ.

RATHER, it was their unwillingness or inability either to understand or believe the Word of God! That is the emphasis in these two verses: “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken...” What had the prophets spoken?

The first prophecy recorded in Scripture is found in the curse God gave upon man’s rebellion. God told the devil:

Genesis 3:15, God told the devil, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman [Eve], and between your seed and her seed [which the rest of Scripture indicates is Christ. Speaking of His crucifixion...]; He [Christ] shall bruise you [the devil] on the head [which is a mortal wound], and you shall bruise him on the heel [which is not a lethal wound].”- from almost the beginning of the time, God spoke of the work that Jesus would do as our Messiah. As John put it...

1 John 3:8b, “...The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Recall, when God made man, He placed him in the Garden of Eden calling him to perfect obedience. If he sinned — rebelled — then he would die.

Genesis 2:15-17, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.’”

Yet, what did the devil do?

Genesis 3:1-6, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden”?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.”’ And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will

be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

The moment that Adam and Eve ate of this tree, not only did they die — spiritually, morally, and eventually physically — BUT so did all of mankind.

Romans 5:18a, 19a, "...through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men... through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners..."

You say, "*But couldn't Adam — and us for that matter — simply ask to God forgive him? God is love!*" As glorious that it is that God is love, He also is just — which means He must punish sin no matter what.

Romans 6:23a, "For the wages of sin is death..."

This is as firm a law as the law of gravity!

That is why God became man, lived a perfect life, and then died on the cross. Jesus did this on our behalf of the elect.

Romans 5:7-8, "For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In our place. By coming to this earth, never sinning, and then dying in our place, Christ paid the penalty for our sin! Speaking of the original command which God placed on Adam/mankind calling for their perfect obedience we read this:

Galatians 3:13. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us [on the cross]- for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'"

Yet NOT everyone receives this forgiveness. People still go to hell when they die. So, how do we receive the forgiveness that Christ's death secured? Simply by moving our trust from ourselves — that we are good enough — and placing it on Christ's work on your behalf. Luke, speaking of a Roman jail guard records:

Acts 16:30-31, "And after he brought them out [Paul and Silas who were imprisoned for preaching about Jesus], he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe [trust] in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.'"

In other words, on what basis should God let us into heaven when we die? It is NOT on the basis of our good deeds because we are sinners and therefore must die. RATHER, it is on the basis of the perfect life and death of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21: speaking of God, "He made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

IT NO DOUBT WAS THIS MESSAGE AND MORE WHICH JESUS PROCLAIMED TO THE DISCIPLES IN OUR TEXT!

Luke 24:27, "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

How incredible! The disciples received a theology lesson by the Savior directly from His Word — a theology lesson like the one I just shared with you. God's solution for all those travelling on the road to Emmaus is the knowledge that the greatest burden they could ever bear has been removed in Christ. In Christ our sin is forgiven! A. W. Tozer, speaking of the burden of all who travel the road to Emmaus, wrote this:

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. It includes an instant and lifelong duty to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably. And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has done none of these things, but has from childhood been guilty of foul revolt against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear.

The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind; give beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. (Tozer, 1920, pp. 10-11)

Tozer put it so well. If every burden you ever have or will face in this life were placed upon your shoulders at one time, it would be lighter than the burden that you and I owe to God on account of our sin, namely the judgment of God on account of our sin! Yet the message that Christ explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is so great and glorious, it lifts the burden!

So, we see the first solution given to all who travel the road to Emmaus: An understanding of the message of God's word. And yet, there is one more element. It



is ultimately addressed by the resurrected Christ.

### [It is Ultimately Addressed by the Resurrected Christ Himself, vv. 28-32.](#)

Luke 24:28-29, “And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.’ And He went in to stay with them”

Travelling in the evening in Palestine at this time involved danger from various sources: robbers, obstacles upon the path, and wild animals. These dangers most likely were used by the disciples to convince their companion to stay with them, “It is getting toward evening.” IN FACT, the disciples are so taken back by this incredible stranger they wanted Him to take the place of honor and so most likely asked Him to give the blessing and so serve the meal.

Luke 24:30, “And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.”

You can imagine that when Christ first joined them, the disciples would NOT have been pleased to have this stranger intrude on them. BUT now they could NOT think of letting Him go. It was then, while Christ served the meal, that their eyes were opened.

Luke 24:31-32, “And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?’-

Suddenly, that which blinded the disciples from seeing their Savior, was removed. Far from abandoning them, Christ had been there all the time; they just didn’t see Him! With this, the two disciples that very hour travelled to Jerusalem to be with the rest of the disciples (vv. 33-35).

Do you understand the glory that is ours in Christ? NOT ONLY is our sin forgiven, BUT we have the assurance that Christ’s presence goes with us at all times. Recall the final words Christ gave His disciples in the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:20b, “...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Such a glorious promise! BUT how do they translate to the world in which I live... when the path I’m on turns into the road to Emmaus? To answer that, recall the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, three young Jewish men who only wanted to serve the Lord.

The King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had a massive image of himself made of gold which he then required his entire kingdom to bow down to and worship it. Well, though they were relatively young, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego boldly refused. And for their refusal, they were sentenced to the horrific death of being burned alive—and so they entered upon the road to Emmaus!

Yet, prior to the sentencing, they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar who spoke with them, threatened them, and did everything he could to manipulate them into bowing before his image. Yet they refused. Which brought about an anger in Nebuchadnezzar that was unreal.

Daniel 3:19-20, “Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain valiant warriors who *were* in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, in order to cast *them* into the furnace of blazing fire.”

The text continues to record that the soldiers who carried out the sentence themselves perished because of the intensity of the heat! Yet as many of you know, far from perishing, a miracle occurred — a miracle which the king himself witnessed with his own eyes.

Daniel 3:24-26, “Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he responded and said to his high officials, ‘Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘Certainly, O king.’ He answered and said, ‘Look! I see four men loosed *and walking about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the gods!*’”

The “fourth man” was none other than the Lord Jesus Himself. The king then called upon Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to come out of the fire — which they did. And miraculously, NOT a hair on their head nor any part of their clothing was singed!

This account reminds us that while the three men came out of the fire unscathed, the “fourth man” — Jesus Christ — remained in the fire such that this text remains a glorious assurance that as dark as your road may be, in Christ you have the assurance that He will never leave you, but always be with you. We need only lift our eyes to Him!

## References

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## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> Consider the following patriarchs: David spent 3 years in “exile”, Elijah and Jezebel, Jonah and the large fish, each of the 11 disciples, Paul who prayed 3 times for God to remove his thorn, Habakkuk who asked God “Why?”, Joseph in Egypt, Jacob’s suffering at the hand of Laban, John the Baptizer in prison and executed, and more.