Beginning at Moses: The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-48

by Escape the Mustard Tree

It's the first day of the week, the third day since Jesus' crucifixion, and by afternoon Jerusalem has already had one report it didn't believe. At dawn a group of women had come to the tomb with spices and found the stone rolled away and the body gone. Two men in shining garments stood by them and asked, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" and then reminded them of what Jesus had told them in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered up, crucified, and rise the third day (Luke 24:1-7). The women carried all of it back to the eleven apostles. "And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11). Peter ran to the tomb, stooped down, saw the linen cloths lying by themselves, and went away "marveling to himself at what had happened" (Luke 24:12). Marveling isn't the same as understanding, and in Luke's telling no one has yet seen Him.

This is where the story stands. The rulers of Israel have handed their Messiah over to Rome and asked for a murderer to be released in His place (Luke 23:1-2, 18-25). The kingdom announced at the Jordan and preached in every village has been refused by the men who sat in Moses' seat. And the first thing the risen Jesus does in Luke's Gospel isn't a sign in the temple or an appearance before the council. He falls into step with two discouraged disciples on a country road and teaches them the Old Testament.

The Passage

Luke 24:13-35

> *13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.*
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> *17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"*
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> *18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"*
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> *19 And He said to them, "What things?"*
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> *So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. 22 Yes, and certain women of our company,*

> *who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 24 And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."*
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> *25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*
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> *28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. 30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.*
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> *32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.*

Two Men Walking Away

The two travelers belong to the wider company of disciples. Luke has the women reporting "to the eleven and to all the rest" (Luke 24:9), and these two are among the rest, since they later return to find the eleven gathered (Luke 24:33). One is named Cleopas. The other Luke leaves unnamed, and nothing in the account turns on who he was. What Luke does want seen is the direction they're walking. Jerusalem is where the tomb is, where the women's report is, and where the apostles are still sitting with it, and these two have set out for a village seven miles away with the day nearly gone.

They aren't walking in silence. They "talked together of all these things which had happened," and Luke adds that they "conversed and reasoned" (Luke 24:14-15), the kind of talk where two men go over the same events again and again, trying to make sense of them. Into that conversation "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." Luke's word *Himself* is emphatic: the very One they're discussing is now walking at their side.

"But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him" (Luke 24:16). Luke doesn't say Jesus disguised Himself. He puts the cause in their eyes, and he puts the verb in the passive. Their eyes *were held*. When the moment comes for them to see, the verb is passive again: "their eyes were opened" (Luke 24:31). Both the holding and the opening are done to them.

This isn't the first time Luke has described these disciples this way. Twice before, Jesus told them in so many words what was going to happen, and twice Luke records that it didn't reach them. After the Transfiguration He said:

Luke 9:44-45

> *"Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.*

And on the last journey up to the city He was more specific still:

Luke 18:31-34

> *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*

Notice what Jesus attached to that second prediction: "all things that are written *by the prophets*." The suffering wasn't news He was breaking to them. It was already written, and they'd been reading it all their lives. Luke has run a thread of hidden things through his Gospel, and the road to Emmaus is where it gets untied. The same Teacher who said it before the cross now says it after, and this time He doesn't leave it as a prediction. He takes them to where it was written.

First, though, He asks a question. "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" (Luke 24:17). The word Luke uses for *sad* describes a face as much as a mood, gloomy and downcast. It's the same word Jesus used for the hypocrites who put on "a sad countenance" when they fasted (Matt. 6:16). These two aren't putting anything on. They're men who had staked everything on a hope, and they believe that hope is gone.

Everything They Knew

Cleopas's answer is full of irony he can't see. "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:18). The only one on that road who fully knows what happened in Jerusalem is the stranger. Jesus doesn't correct him. He asks, "What things?" (Luke 24:19), and lets them tell it. What comes out is a remarkably complete account.

They begin with who He was: "Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19). That description is borrowed from Moses. When Stephen later rehearses Israel's history before the council, he says Moses "was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22), and Moses himself had told the nation, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deut. 18:15). These two already had a category from the Law for what they'd seen in Jesus. It's a true category, and it's going to matter that Jesus begins His answer with Moses.

They go on to what happened to Him: "the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him" (Luke 24:20). They say *our* rulers. The men who handed Him over weren't foreigners. They were the nation's own leadership.

Then comes the sentence that tells you what these men had been hoping for: "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). That hope didn't come from nowhere. It's the hope Luke has carried since his first chapter. Gabriel told Mary her Son would receive "the throne of His father David," that "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). Zacharias praised "the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68). Anna spoke of the child "to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). The two on the road were looking for exactly what Israel's prophets had promised and what Luke's opening chapters announced: the nation's redemption under her King.

Jesus never tells them that hope was mistaken. Forty days later, after He'd spent that whole time "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3), the apostles asked Him the same question:

Acts 1:6-7

> *Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."*

He corrects the timing and nothing else. The kingdom to Israel is still on the table; *when* belongs to the Father. So the trouble on the Emmaus road isn't the content of what these men hoped for. It's that their hope had no room in it for a Messiah who would be killed first, and when He was killed, the hope died with Him. Luke puts their hope in the past tense: *we were hoping*.

They even have the timeline. "Today is the third day since these things happened" (Luke 24:21). Jesus had said "the third day" more than once (Luke 9:22; 18:33), and the phrase is still rattling around in their account, though they don't seem to know why they mention it. Then they report the rest: the women at the tomb early, the missing body, "a vision of angels who said He was alive," and the men who went and checked and found everything "just as the women had said; but Him they did not see" (Luke 24:22-24).

Put it together and these two have every fact a creed would need. They know the crucifixion, the tomb, the empty tomb, and the angels' word that He's alive. They're walking away from all of it with sad faces. The facts weren't what they were missing. What they were missing was the Scripture that tells what the facts mean, and that's exactly where Jesus goes next.

"O Foolish Ones"

Luke 24:25-26

> *Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"*

The word *foolish* sounds harsher in English than it is in Luke's Greek. Jesus doesn't use *moros*, the word behind "You fool!" that He warned against in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:22). He uses *anoetos*, built on *nous*, the mind or understanding. An *anoetos* man is one who hasn't put his understanding to work on what's in front of him. Paul uses the same word, with the same "O" in front of it, for the churches of Galatia: "O foolish Galatians!" and "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you

now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:1, 3). Paul is writing to saved men whose standing isn't in question, and so is Jesus. This is a Teacher rebuking disciples for not thinking through what they'd been given. And the chapter doesn't leave them there. Before it's over, He'll open the very thing they failed to use. "He opened their understanding" (Luke 24:45), and the word there is *nous*.

The second charge is "slow of heart to believe in *all* that the prophets have spoken." The weight falls on *all*. These men believed the prophets. They believed them about the King. They knew God had told David, "your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16), and that Isaiah had promised, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom" (Isa. 9:7). What they hadn't believed was the rest of what the same prophets said, the parts about rejection and wounding and death. They'd kept the glory and set aside the suffering, and when the suffering came, they had nothing to put it in.

Then Jesus asks the question that turns the whole conversation: "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things?" The word behind *ought* means *it was necessary*. Luke uses it over and over for the cross, and it's always Jesus' own word for what's coming. "The Son of Man must suffer many things" (Luke 9:22). "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation" (Luke 17:25). On the night He was betrayed He quoted Isaiah and said it had to happen to Him: "this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors'" (Luke 22:37; Isa. 53:12). The cross didn't derail the plan. It was the plan, and it had been written down for centuries.

The question also fixes the order: suffer *these things*, and *enter into His glory*. Suffering first, then glory. Peter, who had been among the disciples it was hidden from, later wrote that the prophets themselves had been trying to work out that very sequence:

1 Peter 1:10-11

> *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

The sufferings and "the glories that would follow." That was the prophets' own message, and the Spirit speaking through them was "the Spirit of Christ." For the two on the road, the sufferings were finished and behind Him. The glory had begun at the empty tomb, and it's headed for the day He described Himself, when the Son of Man "comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26), "coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27). The hope of a King in glory wasn't wrong. It was out of order.

Beginning at Moses

"And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). The verb *expounded* is *diermeneuo*, to interpret something all the way through; the English word *hermeneutics*, the study of how to interpret Scripture, comes from the same root. What Jesus gave these two was an interpretation of the whole Old Testament, beginning with its first books, and its subject was "the things concerning Himself."

Luke doesn't list the passages. He doesn't have to, because the men Jesus taught went out and preached, and Luke recorded that preaching in his second volume. Peter told a crowd at the temple that God had fulfilled "those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer," and then quoted Moses' promise of a Prophet (Acts 3:18, 22). Philip found an Ethiopian reading Isaiah 53, "and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). Paul in the synagogue at Thessalonica "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead" (Acts 17:2-3). Before King Agrippa he said he taught "no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come — that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:22-23). In Rome he spent a whole day "persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23). That's the Emmaus lesson being taught again, and the texts the apostles reached for show us where Jesus went. Here are some of them, in the order He began.

In Moses

"Moses" here doesn't mean starting with the man himself, in Exodus, where he's born. It means the five books he wrote, Genesis through Deuteronomy, which Israel called the Law. That's how Scripture uses the name. Abraham tells the rich man, "They have Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29), and James says that "Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21). So when Jesus began at Moses, He began at Genesis, with the first pages of the Bible.

The first promise of a Deliverer is spoken in Eden, to the serpent, on the day man fell:

Genesis 3:15

> *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*

Both halves are already there in the first gospel word of Scripture. The woman's Seed will be wounded; His heel is struck. And the Seed will crush the serpent's head. Suffering and victory are joined in one sentence before Adam has left the garden.

Generations later God told Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love," and offer him on a mountain He would show him (Gen. 22:2). "Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off" (Gen. 22:4). On the way up, the son carrying the wood asked the question the whole Old Testament would go on asking:

Genesis 22:7-8

> *But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.*

A father offering his only, beloved son; a third day; and a son received back. Hebrews says Abraham reasoned "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense" (Heb. 11:19).

In Egypt, the night God struck the firstborn, every Israelite household killed a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts. "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12:13). Paul names the antitype in four words: "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

In the wilderness, when the people were dying from the bites of fiery serpents, God gave a strange remedy:

Numbers 21:8-9

> *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.*

Jesus applied it to Himself, and He used the same word of necessity He uses on the Emmaus road: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

And Moses gave Israel the promise these two men had already reached for: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deut. 18:15). They'd called Jesus "a Prophet mighty in deed and word." They were right, and Moses was where to start.

In the Prophets

Isaiah's fourth Servant Song opens with glory, not suffering: "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high" (Isa. 52:13). Then it goes down into the valley:

Isaiah 53:3-5

> *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*

And it closes with the Servant rewarded: "Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). That last line is the one Jesus quoted on the night of His arrest (Luke 22:37). Isaiah announces the outcome first, the Servant exalted (Isa. 52:13), and then tells how He comes to it, and the telling runs in the order Jesus gave on the road: rejected and wounded first, then given a portion with the great *because* He poured out His soul.

Isaiah also wrote the Servant's own words: "I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50:6). Daniel, counting out the seventy sevens, named the Anointed One and said what would happen to Him: "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself" (Dan. 9:26). The same Daniel had seen "One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven," and "to Him was given dominion and

glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him" (Dan. 7:13-14). Cut off, and given a kingdom. Both are in Daniel.

Jesus had pointed to Jonah as well. In Luke's account He calls Jonah a sign: "For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation" (Luke 11:30). Matthew records Him spelling out what the sign was: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40).

In the Psalms

When Jesus gives the same lesson to the eleven that night, He names the Psalms alongside the Law and the Prophets (Luke 24:44), and they hold some of the clearest pictures of all. Psalm 22 opens with the cry He gave from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46), and goes on:

Psalm 22:16-18

> *For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*

But the psalm doesn't end at the cross. It ends with the nations: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations" (Ps. 22:27-28). One psalm takes the Sufferer from pierced hands to a kingdom.

David wrote, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16:10), and fifty days after Emmaus Peter stood up at Pentecost and said David "spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:31). Psalm 118 said, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Ps. 118:22), and Jesus had already quoted it to the chief priests in the temple, at the end of His parable about the vinedressers who killed the owner's son (Luke 20:17). And Psalm 110 has the LORD telling David's Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool" (Ps. 110:1). Jesus raised that verse with the scribes too (Luke 20:41-44), and it carries the shape of everything since Emmaus: seated now, waiting *till*.

These two men had heard every one of these passages read in the synagogue all their lives. Nothing new was added to the Scriptures on the road to Emmaus. What changed was that the Teacher put Himself in the middle of them, and the passages they'd known as separate pieces turned out to be one account of one Person.

Hearts Burning on the Road

Seven miles is a walk of two or three hours, and Jesus filled it. By the time they reached Emmaus the light was going, and Luke records a small detail that's easy to pass over: "He indicated that He would have gone farther" (Luke 24:28). He didn't invite Himself in. Had they let Him go, He would have walked on into the dusk.

They didn't let Him go. "But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them" (Luke 24:29). *Constrained* is a strong word. It

means they pressed Him, wouldn't take no. It occurs in only one other place in the New Testament, and Luke wrote that one too. At Philippi, a woman named Lydia heard Paul by the riverside:

Acts 16:14-15

> *Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.*

"So she persuaded us" is the same verb as "they constrained Him." And just before it, "the Lord opened her heart," with the same verb of opening Luke uses three times in Luke 24. The two scenes run the same way. A heart is opened by the word, and the one whose heart was opened won't let the messenger leave. Lydia hadn't seen any sign. Cleopas and his companion hadn't recognized anyone. In both cases what moved them was what they'd heard.

That's what the two disciples said themselves once their eyes were opened. Their first words to each other weren't about the table at all:

Luke 24:32

> *And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

Their heart *was burning*. The form describes something going on the whole time, burning while He talked and burning while He opened the Scriptures. A few hours earlier Jesus had called them "slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25). It's the same heart. Somewhere between the rebuke and the village, the slow heart caught fire.

Israel's prophets knew what that fire was. Jeremiah, worn out by mockery, decided to stop speaking in God's name altogether, and couldn't:

Jeremiah 20:9

> *Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.*

David described the same thing: "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned" (Ps. 39:3). And God Himself asked through Jeremiah, "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). What burned in the two disciples wasn't excitement over a stranger's eloquence. It was the word of God doing what God said His word does.

Notice when it burned. It burned on the road, *before* they knew who was talking to them. Their eyes were still held the whole way. The Scriptures were already doing their work in them while they couldn't yet see, so that by the time their eyes were opened at the table, their hearts had been made ready for what they'd see. That's why, when they looked back, they pointed to the road and to the opened Scriptures. The table is where they recognized Him. The road is where they'd been taught who He was.

Eyes Opened at the Table

"Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" (Luke 24:30). The guest has become the host. In a house that belonged to one of them, the stranger takes the bread into His own hands and does what the head of a table does.

The four actions are ones Luke has shown before. When five thousand men sat down on the grass near Bethsaida, "He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude" (Luke 9:16). Took, blessed, broke, gave. The two at Emmaus weren't among the apostles who reclined with Him at the last Passover (Luke 22:14), so whatever they recognized at their table wasn't a repeat of a night they'd seen. Luke doesn't turn the scene into a ceremony. He says only that Jesus "was known to them in the breaking of bread" (Luke 24:35): something in the way He took the bread and gave it was His, and they'd seen it before.

"Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him" (Luke 24:31). In the Greek Old Testament the apostles read, that wording sends a reader back to the beginning of the Bible. The first time Scripture says anyone's eyes were opened, it's at a meal too:

Genesis 3:7-8

> *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

Eyes opened, and they knew. In the garden, eating the fruit opened eyes that saw their own shame, and the man and his wife hid from the presence of God. At Emmaus, at a table with bread broken by God's own Son, eyes were opened to see Him, and the two who saw Him got up and ran seven miles to tell the others. Luke doesn't draw the comparison out, and nothing here is built on it. It's an echo of wording, and it's there for anyone who knows the first chapters of Moses, the place Jesus had just started from.

The cup that wasn't taken

One more detail belongs here, offered as an observation and not as a doctrine. On the night before He suffered, Jesus said two things at the Passover table:

Luke 22:15-18

> *Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

Matthew records the same promise and adds who He'll drink it with: "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). At Emmaus there's bread, and there's no cup. Luke says He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. He doesn't say Jesus ate. Later that night He does eat, a piece of broiled fish "in their

presence" (Luke 24:42-43), but He eats it to show that a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones. That meal is proof of His body. It isn't the meal He'd promised.

A reader will ask about Peter's later words, that the apostles "ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead" (Acts 10:41). They read most naturally as the disciples eating and drinking in His company, and they don't say He took the fruit of the vine. So nothing in the record shows Him breaking the promise He made over the cup. If that's what Luke means us to see, the table at Emmaus looks forward. The meal He said He'd share "with you" is still waiting for the kingdom, and that's the same direction Paul gives the Lord's Supper: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). It's a small thing, and nothing else in this paper rests on it, but it fits the rest of the chapter: suffering first, glory after, and the full table held for the day of His glory.

He vanished

The moment they knew Him, "He vanished from their sight" (Luke 24:31). He didn't stay to be looked at. After hours on the road teaching them from the Scriptures, He gave them a single moment of sight and then took it away, and it didn't leave them empty. They had what He'd given them on the road, and that was enough to get them up from the table. Jesus would later say to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). The two at Emmaus were the first to find out why. What sent them back to Jerusalem wasn't the moment of sight. It was the Scripture He'd opened, which was still burning in them after He was gone.

The Same Hour

"So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem" (Luke 24:33). An hour earlier they'd urged a stranger to stay because "it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Now it's dark, and they walk the seven miles back anyway. The same road they'd walked away on, they walk again in the other direction.

They arrive carrying news and find news waiting for them. The eleven and those with them were already gathered and "saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!'" (Luke 24:34). Luke never narrates that appearance; it happened offstage, sometime that same day. Paul puts it at the head of his own list of witnesses, "that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve" (1 Cor. 15:5). The Peter who had left the tomb that morning "marveling to himself" (Luke 24:12) has now seen Him.

Then the two give their report, and Luke records the order they told it in: "And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread" (Luke 24:35). The road comes first. What they'd been taught came before the moment they recognized Him, in the telling as it had in the event.

They haven't finished speaking when it happens again. "Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them" (Luke 24:36). The room is terrified; they think they're seeing a spirit. He shows them His hands and His feet and tells them to handle Him, "for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have," and when they still can't believe it for joy, He asks for food and eats a piece of broiled fish in front of them (Luke 24:37-43). And then, with the whole company gathered and the proof of His body before their eyes, He does exactly what He'd done on the road. He goes back to the Scriptures.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms

Luke 24:44-48

> *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*
>
> *Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the 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 to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things."*

It's the same lesson the two heard on the road, now given to the whole company. Jesus begins by reminding them that none of it is new: "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you." He'd told them in Galilee, and on the way up to Jerusalem, and at the Passover table. What's different now is that it has happened.

He names the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures as Israel arranged them: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings, which open with the Psalms. On the road Luke summarized the lesson as "Moses and all the Prophets" and "all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). Here Jesus spells it out so nothing is left over. There isn't a section of Israel's Bible that isn't about Him. And He says again that it *must* be fulfilled, the same word of necessity He used on the road.

Then Luke says, "He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). The word for *understanding* is *nous*, the word inside the *anoetos* of verse 25. On the road He rebuked two men for being without understanding. Here He opens the understanding of the whole company. Luke has used the same verb of opening three times in one chapter: their eyes were opened (v. 31), He opened the Scriptures (v. 32), and He opened their understanding (v. 45). Eyes, Scriptures, mind. It's the verb Luke reaches for again when he describes Paul at Thessalonica "explaining" from the Scriptures that the Christ had to suffer (Acts 17:3). Paul was doing for others what had been done on the Emmaus road.

Beginning at Jerusalem

What the Scriptures say "must" happen doesn't stop at the third day. It includes what comes next: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The order matters. Jerusalem comes first, and the message to Jerusalem is repentance.

The nation that heard this preached first was already God's people. Zacharias had prophesied that his son would go before the Lord "to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:77). *His people.* Israel had been redeemed out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover. What the nation needed now wasn't to become God's people. It needed to repent of what it had done to its Messiah and be cleansed, and that's what the apostles preached when they began at Jerusalem. Fifty days later Peter told the crowd at Pentecost, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). A few days after that, at the temple, he preached the Emmaus lesson to the nation almost point for point:

Acts 3:18-22

> *"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.'"*

The prophets foretold the suffering. The nation is called to repent. If it does, God will send Jesus, and the times of restoration the prophets spoke of will come. And Peter ends where Jesus began at Emmaus, with Moses and the Prophet like him. The hope Cleopas had given up on the road, the redemption of Israel, is being offered to Israel again, now with the suffering in its proper place.

One who rose from the dead

There's one more thread in Luke that comes together here. Earlier in his Gospel Jesus told a parable of a rich man who, from Hades, begged Abraham to send someone to warn his five brothers. Abraham answered, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man pressed: if someone went to them from the dead, they would repent. And Abraham said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:29-31).

Now One has risen from the dead. And what He does, on the road and in the upper room, is take His disciples back to Moses and the prophets. He doesn't offer His resurrection as a substitute for the Scriptures. He uses the Scriptures to tell them what His resurrection means. Abraham's answer in the parable and the risen Lord's practice in Luke 24 point to the same place.

Why the Old Testament Is Where We Find the Word Made Flesh

Think about what Jesus had available on that road. He could have told the two who He was the moment He reached them. He could have held out His hands. Later that night He did exactly that for the eleven: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself" (Luke 24:39). On the road He did neither. He kept their eyes held and spent the afternoon teaching them the Old Testament, and only after their hearts were burning did He let them see Him. The order is part of the lesson. He wanted them to know Him from the Scriptures first, and to recognize Him by sight second.

There wasn't any New Testament yet. When Luke writes "the Scriptures," he means the books we call the Old Testament, the same books Israel read in every synagogue on every Sabbath. And when Paul later wrote down the gospel he'd received, he anchored it in those same books, twice in two verses: "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

John's Gospel opens by borrowing the Bible's first words, "In the beginning," and names the One who was there: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Then: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14). The

Word written and the Word made flesh bear witness to each other. When the King rides out at the end of Revelation, "His name is called The Word of God" (Rev. 19:13).

John also records Jesus making the Emmaus claim in a completely different setting. Luke gives it to friends, after the resurrection. John gives it to opponents, in Jerusalem, during the ministry, when the leaders were already seeking to kill Him:

John 5:39, 46-47

> *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal [age-lasting] life; and these are they which testify of Me.... For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*

"He wrote about Me." Jesus said it before the cross to the men who rejected Him, and after the cross to the men who loved Him. The claim is the same on both sides. And John, describing the morning of the resurrection from inside the tomb, admits that he and Peter didn't yet have it either: "For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:9).

The letter to the Hebrews puts the claim in the mouth of the Son Himself, quoting a psalm of David as His words on coming into the world: "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come — in the volume of the book it is written of Me — to do Your will, O God'" (Heb. 10:7; Ps. 40:7). The book is written about Him. He came to do what was written.

Isaiah described how God teaches His word: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10). The Old Testament doesn't hand anyone a finished portrait of the Messiah on a single page. It gives a line in Genesis, a line in Numbers, a song in the Psalms, a chapter in Isaiah, a number in Daniel. On the road to Emmaus the One those lines describe walked beside two men and set them in place, here a little, there a little, from Moses through all the Scriptures, until the portrait was whole. That's why the Old Testament isn't merely the background to the Gospels. Jesus treated it as the place where He is written.

The Nation's Eyes

The two on the road were Israelites, and what happened to their eyes has a larger counterpart in Luke. Less than a week before the crucifixion, Jesus came over the Mount of Olives, saw Jerusalem spread out below Him, and wept:

Luke 19:41-44

> *Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

"Hidden from your eyes." It's the language Luke used of the disciples in chapters 9 and 18, now spoken over the whole city. On the Emmaus road, two men's eyes were held and then opened. The city's eyes

stayed closed. Moses had said it long before, standing with the nation at the edge of the land: "Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day" (Deut. 29:4). Paul quotes the same idea and explains what it means for Israel now: "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded," and "blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:7, 25).

The word that matters there is *until*. The blindness has an end. Moses wrote the pattern into Israel's own history long before Paul. When Joseph's brothers came down to Egypt for grain, they stood in front of the brother they'd sold and didn't know him. "So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him" (Gen. 42:8). He knew them, fed them, and tested them, and only when they came the second time did he make himself known: "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" (Gen. 45:3). Stephen used that very history when he stood before the council that had just condemned Jesus: "And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers" (Acts 7:13).

The prophets describe the nation's own second time. "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn" (Zech. 12:10). Jesus Himself named the day it ends. "For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Matt. 23:39). Hosea gives the order from Israel's side: first, "Come, and let us return to the LORD," and then, "After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight" (Hos. 6:1-2). The nation returns, and then it's raised.

So what happened at Emmaus is a small picture of something still ahead for Israel. Two Israelites walked beside their Messiah without knowing Him, were taught from Moses and the Prophets, and had their eyes opened to see the One they'd been mourning. The nation is still on that road. That day belongs to Israel, and it will come on the terms her own prophets set: the nation turning, the Deliverer coming, and the eyes that were held being opened to look on Him whom they pierced.

Walking With Him Without Knowing Him

Everything so far belongs to its own setting: Israel, her Messiah, the third day, and the redemption the nation was waiting for. That has to stand on its own. But there's a line that runs from that road to the Christian today, and it runs along the offer. The heavenly portion of the kingdom was offered to Israel and refused, and it's now offered to the Christian. What prepared men to receive it then, what dulled them to it, and what they did once their eyes were opened, carry over. Israel's promises stay Israel's. What follows is drawn along that line, as a secondary step.

Start with who the two were. They were disciples. They'd followed Jesus, they belonged to the company of His people, and Luke never suggests their standing was in question. And Jesus walked beside them for miles while they didn't know Him. A Christian can be in that same place. He can belong to Christ, pray, gather with other Christians, and know the right answers, and still not recognize Jesus when the Scriptures speak of Him. His eyes are held, in a sense, not because he's outside the family but because no one has opened the Scriptures to him.

The two also had every fact. They knew the crucifixion, the tomb, and the report that He was alive, and they were walking away sad. Facts aren't nothing; they're the ground everything stands on. But a man

can hold every fact of the gospel and still not know what they mean for him, and when his own hope seems lost, the facts alone won't turn him around on the road.

Here the Emmaus road holds up a mirror, and the image is reversed. The two disciples held the glory and dropped the suffering. They believed the prophets about the King and the throne, and the cross took their hope away. Many Christians today hold the other half. They know the suffering well: Jesus died, and their sins were paid for. But they've never been shown what comes after it, the "enter into His glory" of Luke 24:26, the King coming in His kingdom and the call to reign with Him. That's just as much a part of "all that the prophets have spoken," and the apostles held the Christian to the same order Jesus gave on the road. Paul writes that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17), and "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). Suffering first, then glory, for the Christian too, and the glory is held out as something to be reached for, not assumed. A believer who has only the first half is "slow of heart to believe in all."

The things that dulled the two disciples dull Christians the same way. Jesus called them slow of heart. The letter to the Hebrews tells Christians who should have been teachers by then that they had "become dull of hearing," needing "someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God," so that they had "come to need milk and not solid food" (Heb. 5:11-12). The danger isn't that such a man stops being God's. It's that he never grows past the first lesson, and the meat of what God has said about His Son and His kingdom stays closed to him.

The things that readied them ready Christians the same way too. The Scriptures were opened, and their hearts burned before their eyes did. And when He made as though He'd go on, they wouldn't let Him. Jesus later says almost the same thing to a church, the church at Laodicea, which thought itself rich and didn't know its own poverty (Rev. 3:17):

Revelation 3:20-21

> *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*

It's spoken to Christians, inside a church. The table comes first: "I will come in to him and dine with him." And right behind it is the throne. The two at Emmaus urged Him to stay, and He went in and sat at their table. For the Christian today, the invitation is still being made from the other side of the door, and what's attached to it is a share in His reign.

The bread at Emmaus holds something for the Christian too. The two knew Him "in the breaking of bread" (Luke 24:35), and the bread points to who He is. At Capernaum Jesus had told the crowd, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35), and then said something that offended many who heard it: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). When they stumbled over it, He told them what He meant: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). The bread is the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and a man feeds on Him by taking in His words. Moses had said so long

before: "man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD" (Deut. 8:3), and Jesus answered the tempter with that very verse (Matt. 4:4).

Bread does no one any good while the loaf sits whole on the table. It has to be broken and given. The Word is the same. It has to be broken open, read and compared and fed on, here a little, there a little. And the One who opens it is the Spirit. On the night before the cross Jesus told His disciples:

John 16:13-15

> *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."*

The Spirit takes what is the Father's, which is the Son's, and makes it known. At Emmaus the bread was broken, and eyes that had been held were opened to see Him. When a Christian breaks open the Scriptures, the Spirit does the same work. The One who had been walking beside him unrecognized is made known.

Last, look at what they did. They didn't stay at Emmaus to talk over what they'd seen. They "rose up that very hour" and went back to the others and told what had happened on the road (Luke 24:33-35). Opened eyes sent them back to the company of disciples, and Jesus gave the whole company the same charge: "And you are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48).

The Road, Not the Table

When the two disciples finally knew who had been walking with them, they didn't talk first about the moment they saw Him. They talked about the road. "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

The table lasted a moment. He broke the bread, their eyes were opened, and He was gone. The road had lasted for hours, and it was the road they carried with them back to Jerusalem in the dark. No one reading Luke today sits at that table in Emmaus or stands in that upper room and handles His hands and feet. But every reader can walk the road. The same Scriptures Jesus opened are still open: Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, every part of them written "concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). The Spirit who spoke in the prophets was "the Spirit of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:11), and the One they spoke of is the same Jesus who walked to Emmaus.

That's where the risen Lord sent His disciples to find Him, and that's where He is still found. Begin at Moses. Read all the Prophets. Let Him expound in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, the sufferings and the glories that follow. The eyes may open slowly. The heart will burn first.

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.