

How Slow Embers Catch Fire

Thomas Robinson, *Born to a Living Hope 1*, April 3, 2016

Luke 24:13-48

After the Crucifixion, Two Disciples Encounter Jesus

¹³ That very day two of them [the disciples] were going to a village named **Emmaus**, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, **Jesus himself drew near** and went with them. ¹⁶ But their **eyes were kept from recognizing him**. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “*What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?*”

And they stood still, **looking sad**. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named **Cleopas**, answered him, “*Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know **the things that have happened there in these days?***”

¹⁹ And he said to them, “*What sort of things?*”

And they said to him, “*The things concerning **Jesus of Nazareth**, a man who was **a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people**, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be **condemned to death**, and **crucified him**. ²¹ But **we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel**. Yes, and besides all this, it is now **the third day** since these things happened. ²² Moreover, **some women of our company amazed us**. They were **at the tomb early in the morning**, ²³ and when they **did not find his body**, they came back saying that they had even seen **a vision of angels**, who said that **he was alive**. ²⁴ Some 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**.”*

²⁵ And he said to them, “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!* ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the **Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?**”

²⁷ And beginning with **Moses** and all the **Prophets**, he interpreted to them in all the **Scriptures** the things concerning himself.

Jesus Breaks Bread with the Disciples

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “***Stay with us**, for it is toward evening and the **day is now far spent**.*” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at table with them, **he took the bread and blessed and broke it** and gave it to them. ³¹ And **their eyes were opened**, and they recognized him. And he **vanished** from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “*Did not **our heart burn within us** while he talked to us on the road, while **he opened to us the Scriptures?***”

Back in Jerusalem – Meeting Jesus Again

³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “***The Lord has indeed been raised, and he has appeared to Simon!***” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, **Jesus himself stood among them**, and said to them, “***Peace to you!***” ³⁷ But they were **startled and frightened** and **thought they saw a spirit**. ³⁸ And he said to them, “*Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?*” ³⁹ See **my hands and my feet**, that it is **I myself**. *Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have **flesh and bones** as you see that I have.*” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ And while they **still disbelieved for joy** and were **marveling**, he said to them, “*Have you any thing here **to eat?***” ⁴² They gave him a piece of **broiled fish**, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are **my words** that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the **Law of Moses** and the **Prophets** and the **Psalms** must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the **Scriptures**, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the **Messiah would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead**, ⁴⁷ and that **repentance and forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations/Gentiles**, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.**”

Broken Hopes and Living Hope

We focus on the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection from Easter to Pentecost: a living hope (1Pet 1:3).

Jesus entered Jerusalem to such hope, all so cruelly crushed in a cross and tomb! How could things go so wrong? How could a movement emerge? Was it wrong? What did Jesus’ resurrection mean?

Luke emphasizes the perplexing events. None of Jesus’ disciples could grasp his crucifixion or thought anything good could follow it. They were broken-hearted, disappointed. Male disciples hid. The women went to the tomb with spices to cover the smell of death. Then new things began to happen. An empty tomb. Women were told by ‘angels’ that Jesus was alive. The apostles couldn’t believe it. They were amazed. They talked, argued. If only! Why not prevent death? Why not redeem Israel?

Jesus had told them in advance but had not taught them a doctrine of his death and resurrection. It was important they experience it happening first and then come to an understanding of the meaning of the events. This was to be a transformation of the world, of life on the deepest level, a living hope.

Engaging the Mind with New Vision, New Meaning

Jesus challenged the couple traveling to Emmaus to think clearly. To let the events open their heart / minds to new understanding. An impossible event had happened! What else could be different?

Crucifixion: hopes crushed, defeat by oppressors wielding death. Resurrection changed hopeless defeat into new power. Death conquered! It illuminated Jesus’ identity. It challenged long received ways of interpreting scripture. It sparked new Hope. It opened the future and changed the present.

First the fact/event. Jesus challenges the disciples to accept their own experience. Look! Touch. Think. Remember. What was happening went against their beliefs, the story of God’s rule they understood. Here was final physical resurrection. The same person but new, beyond death. Spirit and body.

Meaning in Scripture. Jesus led them from Genesis to the prophets and writings. They needed to see that the story / meaning they had found shaped and limited their expectations. He opened their minds to see a greater narrative in texts and meanings they had devalued or misread. These events were the exact culmination of the story of Israel leading to a Messiah for the world, not against the world.

A Heart Bursting into Flame

As the events merged with that meaning, they not only illuminated their minds, a fire was lit within them.

The two on the road especially noticed it because they had not realized they were talking with Jesus.

But Jesus allowed them to recognize him not in the words alone, only when Jesus broke bread – meaning united with the physical. This marked a deep personal relationship and echoed “*This is my body, given for you.*” The human united in the transformation of broken hopes into a vibrant new faith and certainty. Resurrection. Hope! The world is profoundly full of God’s grace and power; God has done a new thing, as he promised. Jesus is the living Lord. So also with the disciples later: Spirit and Body united.

A Life that Testifies to Hope

“*You are witnesses!*” This doesn’t stop. You live for this. You die for this. Here is the uniting of all our pain and joy in the Messiah of God. All thinking is transformed by these events: repentance (*metanoia*). God gives release, forgiveness. He gives it not only to Israel, but also to all nations. It starts from Jerusalem (redemption of Israel). This is your future and the hope of all the world renewed. This is God’s story that gives meaning to our past, present, and future. A living hope.