

# Revealed

Jesus reveals His identity to those seeking Him.

Scientific investigation has uncovered amazing data about the way the world and the universe works. Yet there are questions that some of the world’s top scientists admit seem to be beyond the capabilities of science to answer definitively—at least for now. One basic question science has been unable to answer is this one: “Why does anything exist?” Or to frame the question another way, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

Theologians sometimes refer to the existence of the physical universe as general revelation. As the apostle Paul explained in Romans 1:20: “For [God’s] invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made.” In other words, like a masterpiece sculpture, the creation reveals truth about itself and also truth about its Creator. Yet, such general revelation still does not answer the question of why—that is, for what purpose—creation exists. Thankfully, God did not limit our knowledge of Him to general revelation.

Theologians refer to the Scriptures as part of God’s special revelation. The Bible is truth that God revealed to human writers through inspiration by the Holy Spirit. These inspired writers—over a period of more than a thousand years—produced a written record that is truth without any mixture of error. The pinnacle of God’s special revelation, however, came in the miracle of the incarnation. According to Hebrews 1:2, “In these last days, [God] has spoken to us by his Son.” And as Jesus Himself explained to one of His disciples, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

In this Bible study session, we will focus on a passage in Luke’s Gospel in which the risen Son of God appeared to two of His followers in the aftermath of His resurrection. In the encounter, the two followers learned more about God and His purposes than they had ever known before. Through their story, today we too can learn more about God and His purposes than we have ever known. This session will remind us that Jesus graciously reveals His identity to those who seek Him.

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **LUKE 24:13-35**

In Luke 24:13-35, Luke detailed one of the most extensive resurrection appearance accounts in all of the Gospels. The risen Lord Jesus appeared to two of His followers—one named Cleopas and the other unnamed—as they walked from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus some seven miles away. As they traveled, the two disciples discussed and argued about the recent events that had occurred (24:13-14).

The risen Lord came alongside the two followers on the road, but they were prevented from recognizing Jesus. When He inquired about the dispute the two disciples had been having, they expressed surprise that anyone who had been in Jerusalem would not be aware of the things that had happened concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Cleopas then told about the disciples' dashed hope that Jesus was the Messiah who would restore the kingdom of Israel. He went on to tell about hearing reports from some women and others about the tomb being empty (24:15-24).

Jesus rebuked the two disciples for being slow to believe the many prophecies concerning the Messiah's path of suffering. He then used the Old Testament Scriptures to explain the prophecies He had fulfilled (24:25-27).

When the group arrived at Emmaus, the two disciples urged Jesus to stay with them for the night. At their meal, Jesus served as the host. His doing so opened the disciples' eyes to recognize Him, but Jesus then disappeared from their midst. The two disciples recalled how their hearts had been stirred when Jesus explained the Scriptures to them on the road, so they decided to return immediately to Jerusalem and inform the apostles of their encounter with the risen Lord (24:28-35).

# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **QUESTIONS** (Luke 24:18-24)

Two of Jesus' disciples—confused and disappointed over the turn of events—decided to leave Jerusalem. They set out walking to Emmaus, discussing and arguing as they went. The risen Lord came alongside the two disciples, but they did not recognize Him. Jesus inquired about the argument they had been having as they walked. The two disciples could not imagine that anyone having been in the city in recent days would be unaware of what had occurred.

## VERSE 18

**The one named Cleopas answered him, “Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?”**

Here Luke revealed the name of one of the two followers: **Cleopas** [KLEE oh puhs]. (This is a shortened form of the Greek name *Cleopatros*.) Luke never stated the second follower’s name, for reasons that can only be speculated. One possibility is that Luke’s source for this account did not reveal (or remember) the name. Others have suggested the second follower might have been Cleopas’s wife. (See John 19:25, where the husband’s name is spelled “Clopas.”) Perhaps, then, only Cleopas was named because only the husband would have engaged an unknown male in conversation on the road. In the end, though, we have to admit that efforts to identify either of the two followers are guesses. The most we can say definitively is that they were part of the larger group of Jesus’ followers beyond the eleven apostles.

That there were two followers who encountered the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus may have been significant to Luke for another reason. In first-century Jewish tradition, at least two eyewitnesses were required to establish testimony as truth. While the testimony of women—if the second follower was indeed Cleopas’s wife—often was disallowed or at least viewed with suspicion in ancient culture (see Luke 24:11), Luke’s Gospel (as well as the Book of Acts) elevates the role of women in the Christian movement.

In any case, the two followers could hardly imagine that any **visitor in Jerusalem** would be unaware of **the things that happened there** during the Passover festival. Their question to Jesus suggests that the sham trials, the brutal beatings, and the death and burial of Jesus had become widely known in Jerusalem. And for Jesus’ followers, including these two, the events of recent days had been both confusing and disheartening.

## VERSE 19

**“What things?” he asked them. So they said to him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people,**

Jesus’ follow-up question (“**What things?**”) was obviously not prompted by a lack of knowledge. Rather, it was a way to draw out the two followers’ understanding of the events that had occurred. Their narration of the events would reveal clues as to their convictions and hopes about Jesus.

The two travelers responded by acknowledging their argument had been about **the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth**. The mention of Jesus’

hometown was a reminder that His followers had not forgotten the details of His childhood and family heritage. In fact, the village had such a negative reputation in the first century that one of Jesus' first followers, when told of His hometown, asked the question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

Well, Jesus did. Moreover, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus acknowledged that Jesus had proven to be **a prophet powerful in actions and speech before God and all the people**. While these are accurate descriptions of Jesus, they may give evidence that these two followers still struggled to embrace the faith commitment expressed by Simon Peter at Caesarea Philippi—that Jesus was (and is) "God's Messiah" (Luke 9:20). Jesus had a reputation as a great teacher and healer even by those who did not believe in Him as Messiah. Even today, many people hold a high opinion of Jesus but fall short of trusting Him as God's Son and our only Savior.

#### VERSE 20

**and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.**

The two travelers then summarized the recent events related to Jesus by identifying the **chief priests and leaders** as those who **handed Jesus over to be sentenced to death and crucified**. While Pilate shared responsibility for the death of Jesus, everyone knew that the governor had initially refused to pronounce Jesus guilty of a capital crime. He had even proposed to release Jesus after a public whipping (see Luke 23:15-16).

Moreover, the death of Jesus was not the only crucifixion during the recent Jewish festival, but it was the one that had everyone talking. These were the events that everyone agreed on. The events that followed, beginning with the discovery of the empty tomb, were the controversial ones that led to different opinions.

#### VERSE 21

**But we were hoping that he was the one who was about to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it's the third day since these things happened.**

The two followers also confessed that they had hoped Jesus **was the one who was about to redeem Israel**. When Joseph and Mary first presented the infant Jesus to the Lord at the temple, an elderly prophetess named Anna had praised God and spoke about Jesus "to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). The concept of redemption has

a rich and deep foundation in the Old Testament (see Ex. 13:14-15; Lev. 25:47-55; Ruth 3:11-12; 4:1-10; Pss. 49:5-9; 69:18; Isa. 48:20; 50:2). In terms of the *redemption of Israel*, the two followers likely understood the concept primarily in a political sense. That is, they had hoped Jesus was a national deliverer who would throw off Rome's dominance and restore the covenant nation to its former Davidic glory. Now that Jesus had been crucified by the Romans, however, their hopes had been dashed. They questioned whether Jesus truly was the Messiah and Redeemer prophesied by the Old Testament.

The followers' disappointment was heightened by the fact that it was **the third day since these things happened**. Some commentators suggest this was a reference to the Jewish belief that the soul left a deceased person's body on the fourth day, voiding any hope of resuscitation (compare John 11:39). Interestingly, the pair did not appear to put any hope in Jesus' promise to "be raised the third day" (Luke 9:22; see also 18:33). This may be one of Luke's most poignant uses of irony: two believers insisting to the risen Christ that He must surely be dead since it was now the third day since His crucifixion!

#### VERSES 22-23

**Moreover, some women from our group astounded us. They arrived early at the tomb, and when they didn't find his body, they came and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive.**

The travelers had one piece of the puzzle they had not been able to understand. The reference to **some women from our group** demonstrates these two followers were indeed disciples of Jesus. They had been with the apostles and others earlier that day when the women who first discovered the empty tomb returned and **reported** the news to the group. The entire gathering of disciples had been **astounded** by the women, who testified that they not only **didn't find** Jesus' **body** in the tomb but also **had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive**. The Greek word rendered *astounded* ("amazed," ESV; NIV) carries the sense of an event's being extraordinary, even supernatural (see Luke 8:56; Acts 2:7,12). Like many others in the group, however, these two followers evidently did not believe the women's testimony (see Luke 24:11).

#### VERSE 24

**Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn't see him."**

Luke reported that, among the apostles, Peter had gone **to the tomb and found it** empty **just as the women had said** (see 24:12). John's Gospel adds

the fascinating details that Peter was accompanied by another disciple, “the one Jesus loved” (probably a reference to the apostle John), and the two apostles raced to the tomb to find only the linen cloths folded neatly in two separate piles (see John 20:3-10). Both Gospel accounts, however, acknowledge that even the apostles who saw the empty tomb did not immediately conclude that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

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## EXPLORE FURTHER

Read the article titled “Redeem, Redemption, Redeemer” on page 1339 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. In what ways did the Old Testament predict that the Messiah would fulfill the role of Redeemer? In what ways has Jesus fulfilled prophecies as the Redeemer? What prophecies still await fulfillment?

## ANSWERS (Luke 24:25-27)

Still unrecognized, Jesus chided His two followers for their failure to believe the Old Testament prophecies that would have given them understanding and hope in their present situation. He then explained to them how the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to Him as the Messiah.

### VERSE 25

**He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”**

The two disciples had factual information about the recent events in Jerusalem, but they failed to correlate those events with Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah or even with Jesus’ previous teachings about what would happen to Him. Jesus thus rebuked His followers for being **foolish** and **slow to believe** (literally, “slow of heart to believe”; see KJV; ESV) **all that the prophets have spoken**. The Greek word rendered *foolish* refers to a lack of understanding, a failure to think through a matter and reach a reasoned conclusion based on the evidence of events, the teachings of Jesus, and the testimony of the Scriptures.

Before we rush to join in rebuking these two disciples, we should admit that sometimes we too can be *foolish* and *slow to believe* the Scriptures. We know the promises of God, but discouraging circumstances and a lack of faith often lead us to worry and falter rather than trust the Lord. The Scriptures, coupled with the faithful instruction of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:13-14), provide

all that we need to understand who Jesus is, what happened to Him and why it happened, and to respond to Him in faith and obedience. We can be grateful that Jesus was patient with His two followers on the road to Emmaus, and we can be thankful as well that He is patient with us today whenever we fail to understand and live by God's Word.

## VERSE 26

### **Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?"**

The concept of a suffering Messiah was not widely accepted or taught by Jewish leaders in the first century. Most of the Jewish populace likely would have reacted to such an idea with the same shock that Simon Peter did at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus revealed that He would face suffering, death, and resurrection. Peter vigorously exclaimed, "Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to you!" (Matt. 16:22). Further, Old Testament messianic prophecies such as Isaiah 53—which clearly presents the concept of substitutionary suffering—were often interpreted as referring to the nation's suffering, not the suffering of its Deliverer.

Because Jesus had taught His disciples the truth about the Messiah's purpose on numerous occasions, His two followers should have understood that it was required **for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory**. The words **wasn't it necessary** render a single Greek term that speaks of a moral or divine requirement. Jesus had prayed in the garden that the Father might take the cup of suffering and death away from Him. But there was no other plan of redemption than the way of suffering; thus, Jesus submitted to the Father's will (see Luke 22:42).

The phrase *enter into his glory* points to the resurrection. By definition, resurrection is the glorious victory of eternal life over sin, suffering, and death. In John 17:3-5, Jesus prayed to the Father: "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ. I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed."

## VERSE 27

### **Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.**

Jesus then provided a Bible study for these two followers to help them understand the events that had recently occurred in Jerusalem. The phrase **Moses and all the Prophets** was a comprehensive way of describing all

of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. The Greek term translated **interpreted** is the basis for our English word *hermeneutics*, meaning “the method and process of biblical interpretation.” Luke did not specify which Old Testament texts Jesus *interpreted* for His followers, but we can probably assume they included passages that predicted His coming, nature, and mission. He may also have explained how the Old Testament canon as a whole—not just in certain passages—pointed to His purpose as the Messiah.

Today, divine guidance is still needed for believers to properly interpret the Scriptures. That is why God sent the Holy Spirit on the church following Jesus’ ascension. Jesus promised that the Spirit would be given to “convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8) and also to “guide [believers] into all the truth” (16:13). The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture (see 2 Pet. 1:20-21), and we cannot rightly interpret the Scripture’s meaning without the aid of the Holy Spirit. Praise God that He has given us all that we need to know Him, trust Him, and obey Him!

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## EXPLORE FURTHER

Read the article titled “Bible Hermeneutics” on pages 204–208 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What are some of the challenges you face in understanding the Scriptures? How does your view of the Bible’s truth and authority affect your approach to Bible study?

## RECOGNIZED (Luke 24:28-31)

After arriving at Emmaus, the two followers of Jesus invited Him to remain with them for the evening. Jesus served as the host at their meal. The two disciples then recognized Jesus, but He disappeared from their sight.

### VERSES 28-29

**They came near the village where they were going, and he gave the impression that he was going farther. But they urged him, “Stay with us, because it’s almost evening, and now the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.**

As the group **came near the village** of Emmaus, Jesus **gave the impression that** (“acted as if,” ESV; “continued on as if,” NIV) **he was going farther**. What exactly Jesus did to indicate this intention is not clear. Perhaps the way into the village was a side path off the main road, and Jesus kept walking on the main road as the two disciples veered toward the village.

In any case, the two followers knew that traveling on foot in the nighttime could be dangerous. Moreover, the two still had not recognized that their fellow traveler and teacher was the risen Jesus.

Two possible factors may have motivated the two disciples to urge Jesus to **stay with** them in Emmaus for the night. First, most people in the ancient Near East were guided by a strong ethic of hospitality. The people of Israel in particular had the added motivation that the Mosaic law commanded the practice of hospitality to strangers (see Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:18-19). Because it was **almost evening** and **the day** was **almost over** (“far spent,” KJV; ESV), the pair felt compelled to invite this stranger to stay the night with them—perhaps in their home.

Another possible motivating factor behind the two disciples’ invitation was the impact this stranger had on them in their conversation along the road. He had taught them things from the Scriptures they had never understood before. Later—after they recognized Jesus and He disappeared from them—the two agreed that their “hearts [were] burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures” (Luke 24:32). Perhaps, then, their urgent invitation to Jesus was born out of a spiritual hunger for the gospel and fellowship with Christ. They didn’t want their experience with this stranger to end!

### VERSE 30

#### **It was as he reclined at the table with them that he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.**

At mealtime, Jesus fulfilled the role of host to His traveling companions. Bible commentators have pointed to other post-resurrection appearances of Jesus that also featured meals (see Luke 24:41-42; John 21:9-14). The description of Jesus’ actions here (**he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them**) is similar to the accounts of His actions in feeding the five thousand (see Luke 9:16) and the Lord’s Supper (see Luke 22:19).

Some Bible students have wondered if Luke intentionally described the meal at Emmaus as similar to the Lord’s Supper. It should be noted, however, that the two disciples at Emmaus were not apostles and thus were not present at the Lord’s Supper. In addition, Jesus did not distribute a cup. (At least Luke did not report that He did, which would have been significant support if the Gospel writer was indeed trying to connect the Lord’s Supper with this meal.) Neither did Jesus make any remarks about the new covenant or the symbolism of the bread. Perhaps, then, the most that can be concluded from this verse is that the resurrected Savior desires to have intimate fellowship (typified by a meal) with His followers (see Rev. 3:20).

## VERSE 31

**Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.**

During the intimacy of the shared meal, the two disciples **recognized** Jesus. The words **their eyes were opened** are to be understood figuratively, not literally. That is, their previous inability to recognize this stranger who walked and talked with them along the road was lifted as though blind eyes had been healed to see clearly. What was the source of their previous inability to recognize Jesus? One suggestion is that Satan had obscured the two followers' spiritual sight with a sense of hopelessness. Their hopes about Jesus had been dashed by the crucifixion.

An alternate view is that the risen Lord intentionally hid His identity from the two followers until He could teach them to rely on God's Word. In John's Gospel, the apostle Thomas declared that he would not believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead unless he could see the nail marks in Jesus' hands and feel the spear wound in Jesus' side. After the risen Lord appeared and invited Thomas to do just as he demanded, the Lord then said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). Jesus' statement to Thomas foreshadows the experience of believers from the first century until now who believe in the Lord Jesus because the Holy Spirit awakens the truth of God's Word in them.

Luke 24:31 concludes with the interesting detail that as soon as the two disciples recognized Jesus, **he disappeared from their sight**. John's Gospel also emphasizes the extraordinary abilities Jesus had in His resurrected state. For example, He appeared to His disciples as they huddled in a house with locked doors (see John 20:19). Although His body was still recognizable by the scars of crucifixion, Jesus could appear and disappear at will. While we as believers will not attain deity when we experience resurrection, we can be assured that our resurrection bodies also will no longer be limited by the ravages of sin's curse. As Revelation 21:4 describes it, "[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away."

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## EXPLORE FURTHER

Read the article titled "Holy Spirit" on pages 759–761 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in justification? In sanctification? How does the Holy Spirit impact your life as a believer?