

## Post-Resurrection & Ascension (Luke 24:36-53)



### A. The Disciples' Fear

The apostles were hiding behind the 'shut doors' (Jn 29:19), maybe with the furniture stacked against the door to block the entrance. They have been on an emotional rollercoaster of inexpressible grief to stunning shock, then awe and wonder to now fearing for their lives from the Jews. (Jn 20:19) 'Fear' makes us withdraw into a locked room and hide by ourselves. Why were they afraid?

**(a) The Cross** – The Jews just got rid of Jesus, the leader of the Messianic movement. The Jewish authorities will now try to hunt down the rest of His followers.

**(b) The Empty Tomb** – this was a much greater threat to the disciples. The temple police could break down their door any moment and demand the body of Jesus, possibly with torture. The past 24 hours have already produced many witnesses who saw Him alive!

### B. Jesus' Presence

**(a)** Suddenly Jesus walked right through the wall and stood in their midst. This is the first time the disciples saw the risen Christ together. But instead of being filled with joy, they were 'terrified and frightened' (v37). How did Jesus just walk past all their security system to just appear in front of them? Was this Jesus' apparition or His real presence? Can you see the disciples with their backs against the wall, gasping?

His first words were: 'Peace be to you' (v36), 'Shalom' in Hebrew. They were familiar with this greeting of Jesus. Just a week before the cross He said to them, *'My peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it afraid.'* (Jn 14:27)

**(b) Why did Jesus appear in this way?** He could have knocked on the door, and wait for them to open the door, so they can invite Him in and stay in control. But Jesus just appeared and stood in their midst. No wall or barrier could stop the Lord. Why did Jesus stay another 40 days on earth? He could have gone straight to heaven after His resurrection. He wanted to complete His disciples' training. He was teaching them to get accustomed to His spiritual presence. But there is more. Jesus also wanted to teach them about His omnipresence. Thomas missed out on this occasion, and he voiced his doubts about Jesus' resurrection – only to find out Jesus heard all their conversation behind the closed door, even though they did not see Him or feel His presence there. Jesus was present among them even when they were not aware of His presence! Jesus was everywhere all the time! *'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'* (Matt 28:20)

### C. Jesus' Body

**(a)** Once the disciples were convinced that this was really Jesus in their midst, He drew their attention to the physicality of His resurrection body. He could walk through a wall, and appear and disappear at will, yet His resurrection body was real. It was not a hologram. *'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.'* (v39) Still, no one dared to get close to touch Jesus. (v40)

Food was a real physical way to convince the disciples and to 'demystify' His resurrection. *'Have you any food here? ...So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.'* (v41-43) When Jesus ate the fish in front of their eyes, it convinced them, and they let their guard down, and finally joy flooded the room. This is the power of fellowship.

**(b) Christian Hope** – Why did Jesus emphasize the 'physical aspect' of His resurrection? This is very important because our resurrection body will be like Jesus' resurrection body. We will not be disembodied spirits floating in space. We will have a real physical body at the resurrection, that will allow us to enjoy the 'real feast' in heaven. The wedding feast of the Lamb will not be a 'hologram feast'. It will be a real meal with real people, but without the problem of calories, sugar, etc. We will retain the benefits of the physical body, but not be limited by the physical world. Jesus raised Lazarus, a little girl, and a young man

from the dead. They came back to life only to die again. But Jesus came back to life never to die again. The resurrection body is of the 'new order of creation'. It will never grow old or get sick or die. We won't eat food for survival, but enjoyment and fellowship.

#### D. The Word of God

**(a)** During His 40 days on earth post-resurrection, Jesus didn't do any public ministry. He didn't preach to the crowd, heal the sick or cast out demons. He didn't appear to unbelievers to convince them of His divinity. He completely focused on training His disciples. Jesus systematically expounded the Scriptures. Pre-resurrection, Jesus occasionally quoted the Scriptures in His preaching. But now He systematically taught the Scriptures to His disciples, starting from Emmaus Rd (v27) and now with the eleven disciples. He 'opened their understanding' that they might comprehend the Word of God - the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms – the 39 books of the Old Testament (v45; c.f. Acts 2:16). He also breathed on them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (Jn 20:22), imparting to them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are the two main channels of knowing God. The entire Bible is the 'revelation of Christ', and it takes the Holy Spirit to unveil Him, 'scriptures written concerning Me.' (v44)

**(b)** Prophetic Perspective on the Cross - The cross was not the place of defeat, but the crucial part of God's total victory for mankind. Now the gospel - the proclamation of God's victory through the cross of Christ - must take place in all nations by His followers. This is God's plan to close this age.

#### E. The Spirit – The Father's Promise

The mission to be Christ's witnesses must be backed up by the power from on high. 'Endue' literally means 'to be clothed' with a special mantle, 'The Promise of My Father' (v49). The disciples were to tarry in Jerusalem until they receive this 'new clothing' from heaven, the Power from on high, on the Pentecost Sunday seven weeks later (C.f. Acts 2:1ff). But when Jesus breathed on the disciples previously, did they receive the Holy Spirit? Yes. Then why were they to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit again? What is the difference between the Resurrection Sunday and the Pentecost Sunday?

The apostles received the New Testament salvation on the Resurrection Sunday. *'If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'* (Rom 10:9) The result was a great joy. Seven weeks later the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The result was the power to be Christ's witnesses.

#### F. Jesus' Ascension

In Bethany on the east side of the temple, out of the sight of the people in the temple, Jesus spread out His nail-scarred hands over them and blessed the disciples. These were the hands that healed the lepers, blessed the babies, cast out demons and raised the dead. Then Jesus ascended into heaven until He disappeared from their sight. Now they were no longer fearful, nor sad to see Jesus go. Instead, they were filled with great joy and praises, worshipping Jesus. In the Jewish mind, worship belongs exclusively to God. So it was a cataclysmic shift for these Jews. They understood Jesus the Son of God was Yahweh God!

Why were they filled with such great joy as they saw Jesus going up to heaven? Possibly because :-

**(a)** They received Jesus' blessing.

**(b)** They were happy for Jesus to return to His Father. Jesus talked about returning to His Father often.

**(c)** This was not a good-bye. Jesus was still with them by His spiritual presence and omnipresence.

**(d)** They were looking forward to receiving the Promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit who is just like Jesus!

**(e)** They saw the glimpse of their own eternal destiny in Jesus' resurrection. Jesus said, *'I am going to prepare a place for you.'* They have seen Jesus' resurrection body, and now they saw Jesus ascending to heaven. They knew for sure heaven is a real place.

This is also our destiny. When Jesus arrived at the throne of God, He breathed down from heaven and His disciples were all filled with God's power. They turned the city of Jerusalem and the world right side up.