





Before we have the Scripture reading, to help us identify with the disappointment of the first disciples on the way to Emmaus, I would like to share a brief and true story from a book by Philip Yancey entitled “**Disappointment with God**”, **chapter 2**. I will summarize in my own words.

He tells the story of a young man called Richard who attended Wheaton College as a graduate student. During his graduate studies, he wrote a book about Job which was good enough to be published. Philip Yancey helped him with the writing of it. He was enthusiastic about the book and about his Christian life. However, a sad series of events shook his faith to the core.

Sometime later, he called Philip Yancey and asked to talk with him privately. What he had to tell him was sad and dramatic because he became extremely disillusioned and disappointed in God.

1 – His parents divorced. He prayed day and night that they would get back together but they did not.

2 – He read the Bible diligently and prayed for guidance. In his heart and mind, when

he felt that it was a proper decision within God's will, he said that everything turned sour. It turned out to be the wrong choice every time, he asserted.

3 – He applied for a job. The employer chose a candidate that was less qualified than Richard. Consequently, he was left with school debts and no income. He felt profoundly let down.

4 – About the same time, his fiancée left him. He felt heartbroken and betrayed. When he tried to discuss the reason why she had left him, she refused to give any explanation. They had often prayed together about their plans and future. Looking back, their prayer time together appeared like a cruel joke.

5 – During the same time, he suffered from physical problems which just added to his feelings of helplessness, depression and misery.

6 – He then went to see a pastor with whom he discussed his personal catastrophes and heart breaks. Richard felt that the pastor's response was very unsympathetic. He felt minimized by the pastor and given a superficial answer seasoned with false hope.

7 – He felt abandoned by God. He perceived that none of his prayers were answered. He simply could not understand why God did not help him. Why God being a good Father, did not protect him.

8 – In a final act of despondency, he prayed to God for about four hours on his knees, lying on the floor begging God to show him that he really existed. Doubt had already invaded his mind. When nothing happened, he seriously doubted God's existence. Why continue to torture himself, he asked. He felt converted—converted away from God.

9 – Afterwards, feeling liberated, he went outside and burned his Bible and all the books and literature he had from Wheaton College. He simply could not understand why God would let him go through such a period of suffering.

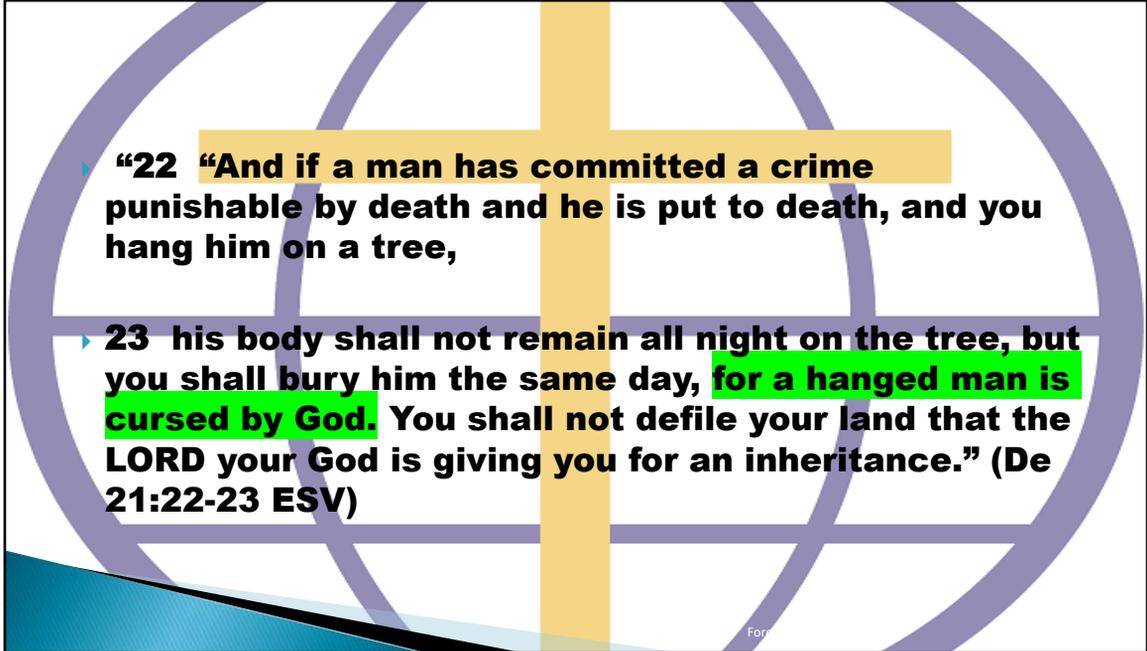
Now I would like for all of us to put ourselves in the shoes of the two disciples from Emmaus as we read and listen to the following Scriptures.

Their expectations of Jesus were very high. They really thought that he was the liberator come from God to liberate the Jews from the oppression of the Roman Empire. They thought he was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies as they understood them.

Now, their hero was brutally crucified between two thieves. They new Jesus did not

and could not survive the crucifixion because nobody ever survived the crucifixion. Crucifixion was a torturous and effective way of punishing and killing criminals and other undesirables.

Furthermore, the Old Testament says the following in Deuteronomy 21.



It is not surprising that they could not believe that Jesus was or could be alive.

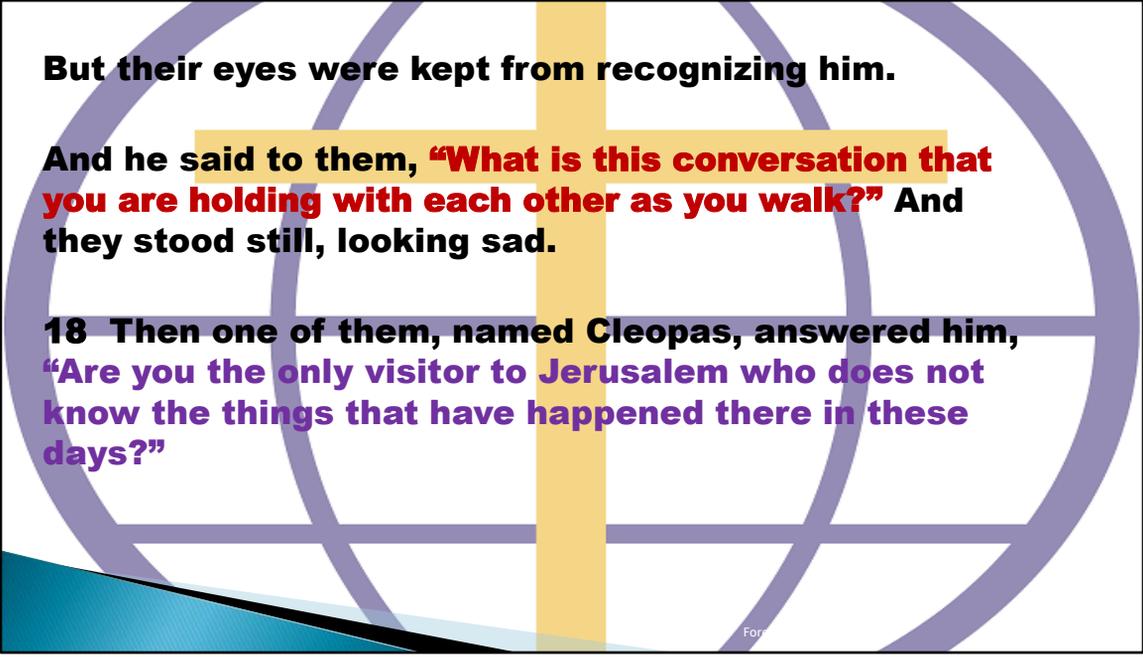
Let us read the Scriptures.

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 24:13-35 (ESV)

“13 ¶ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,

and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

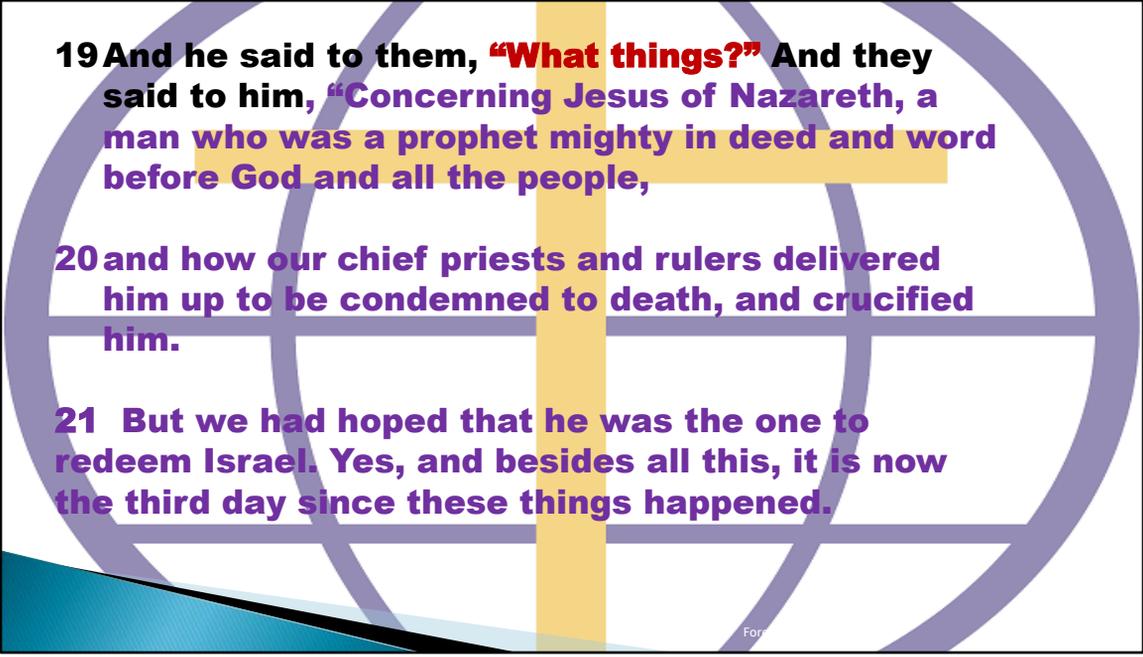
15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.



But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

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?”

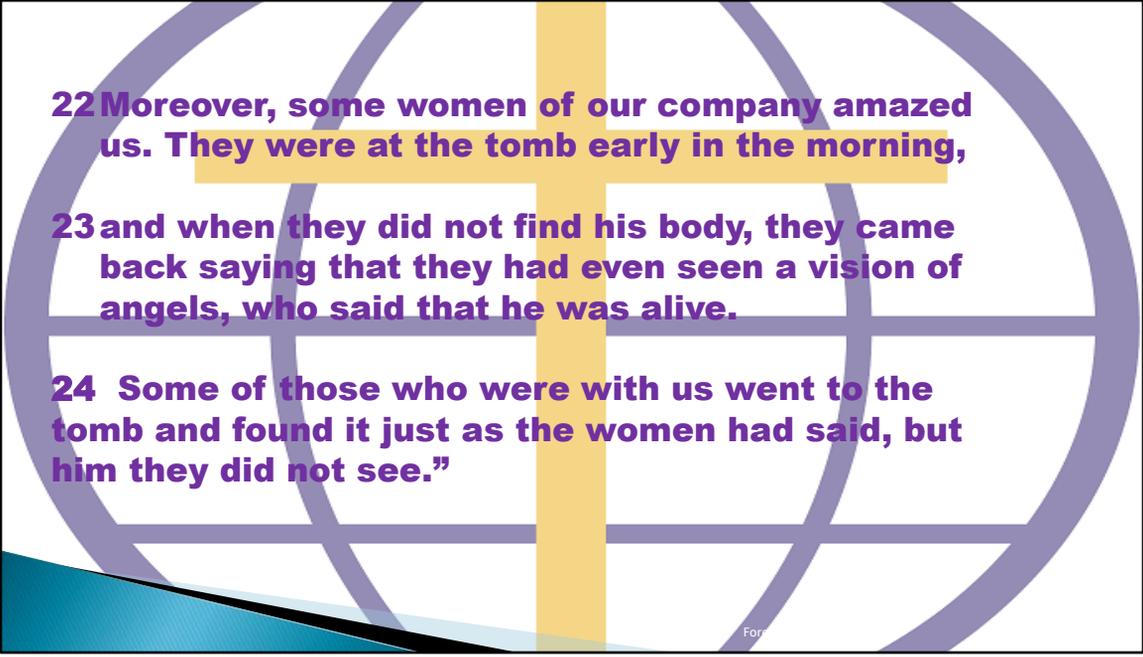


19 And he said to them, **“What things?”** And they said to him, **“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,**

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.

For

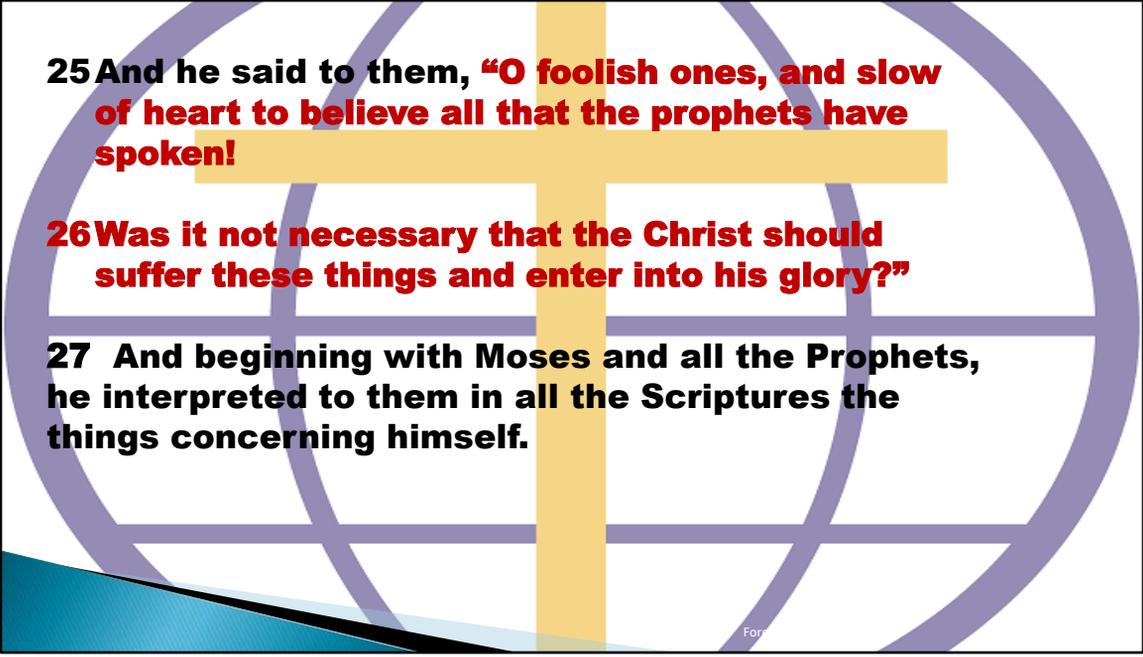


22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,

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.”

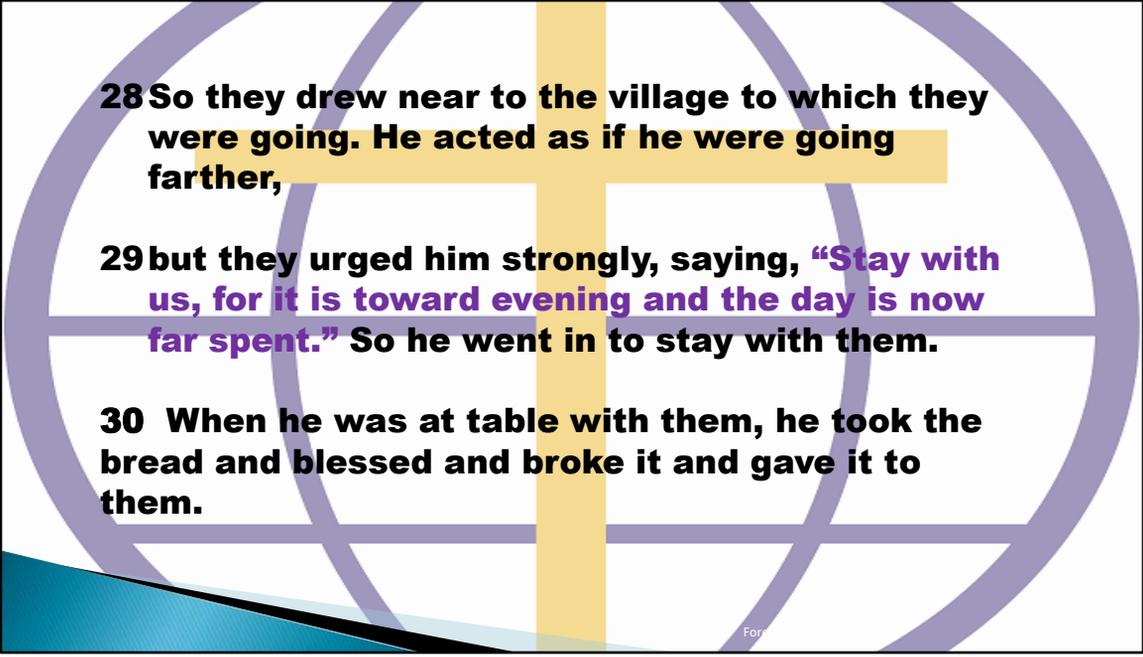
For



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 that the Christ should 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.

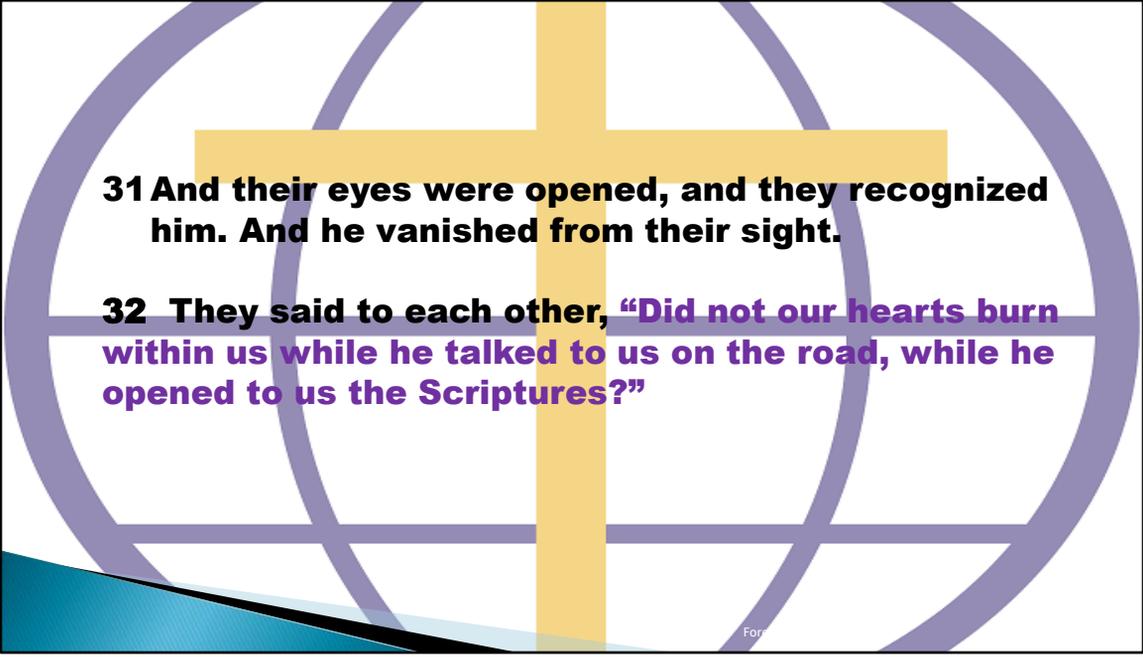


28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther,

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.

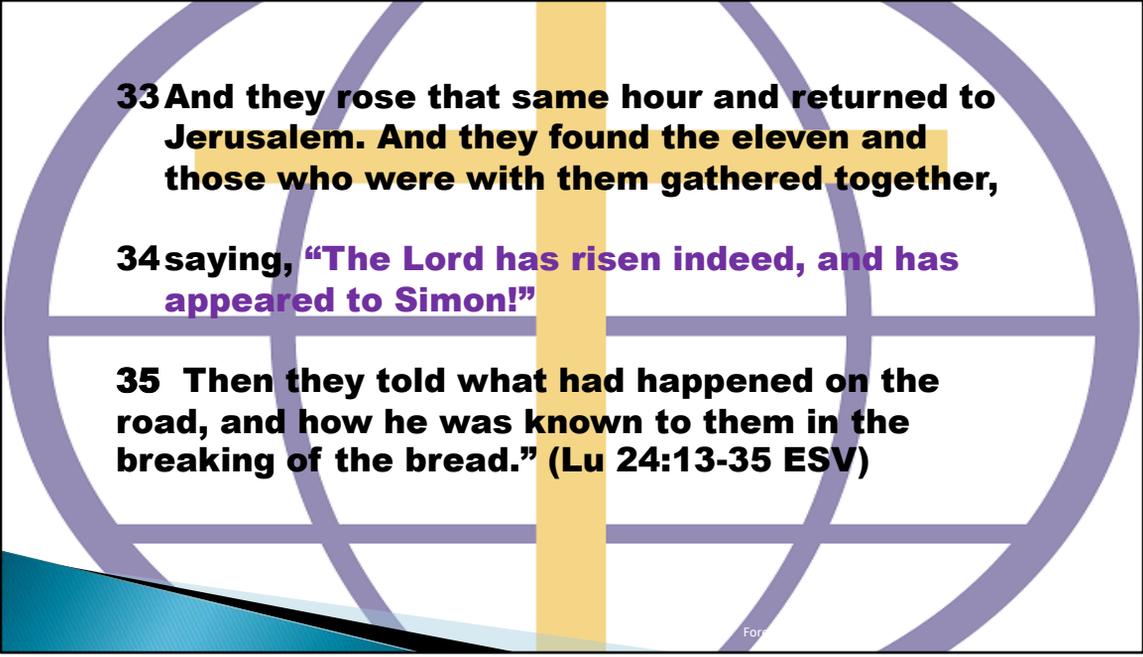
30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

For



31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

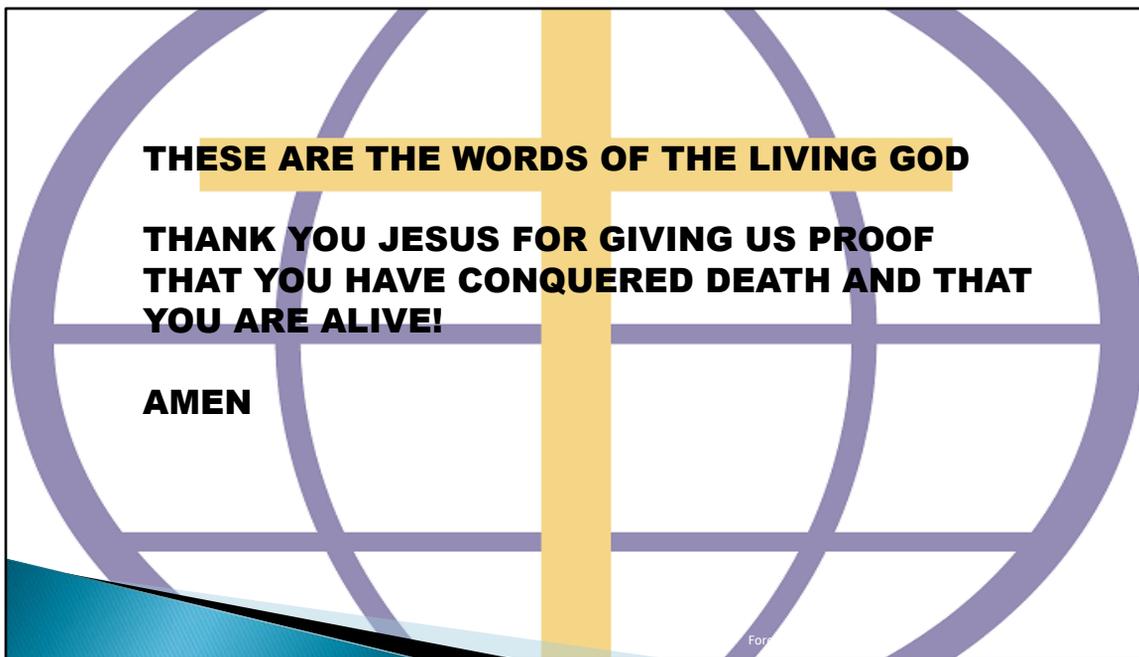
32 They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”



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 risen indeed, and 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.” (Lu 24:13-35 ESV)



These are amazing Scriptures, are they not?

Here we have two very anxious and worried disciples of Jesus whose hope is completely dashed.

Can we begin to imagine the sadness of these two men?

The discussion they had about the past events as they walked and talked together were heated. They probably questioned one another and discussed their perception of what they thought was reality. Their minds must have been racing with all kinds of thoughts and emotions and surely experiencing the profoundest of grief..

The Bible does not tell us the content of their conversation, but we can imagine how we would have thought and felt had we been in their shoes.

Their lives had been invested in Jesus and now, in their eyes, everything was lost. They must have wondered, "what now".

As they were walking, Jesus came alongside and asked them what they were talking

about. They proceeded to tell Jesus about the events of the life and death of Jesus as they perceived it.

They told Jesus about the reports of the women telling them that they had seen a vision of angels and how the woman had told the others that Jesus was indeed alive.

These two disciples did not believe the women. How could this be?

As I read these verses, I am reminded of the Scripture found in second Corinthians where Paul was inspired to write why people reading the Old Testament did not understand and often times still do not understand. (next slide)

“12 ¶ Since we have such a hope, we are very bold,

13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.” (2Co 3:12-15 ESV)

The same remains true today. We can only understand God's plan of salvation by turning wholeheartedly to Jesus.

Just as the disciples walking to Emmaus, we cannot understand the word of God on our own.

The disciples walking to Emmaus could only understand what happened to Jesus when he explained that the Old Testament Scriptures were pointing to him. Jesus had to open their minds.

It is important to note how thick our human blindness is. Even when Jesus explained clearly to them who he was from the Old Testament, they did not fully recognize him.

Their eyes were only open when he was at the table with them, and he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them that their eyes were open! (Verse 30-31)

Jesus is very patient. He knows what is needed for our eyes to be opened. Again, this is a very powerful statement about the human darkness that we live in prior to Jesus

opening our eyes through the Holy Spirit to recognize him..

The same applies to us today. To understand God's plan of salvation, to understand why we are on the earth, to understand our God-given purpose, we must turn to Jesus.

As we read the Scriptures, it is very evident that Jesus has to meet us through the Holy Spirit for us to understand and to be enlightened to the truth.

Jesus alive today!

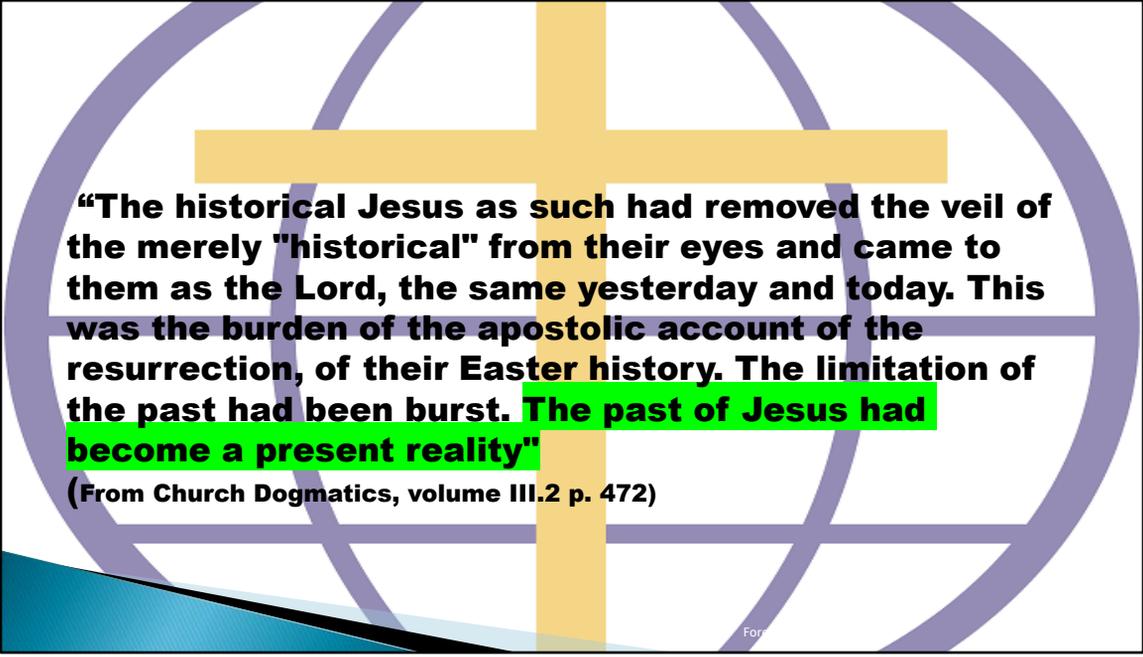
JESUS IN THE PRESENT

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Heb 13:8 ESV)

Until Jesus opened their eyes, they saw him as a figure from the past. They reminisced about who he was and what he had done. He was a past figure.

When he revealed himself to them, he became a present figure, a present person, a present reality!

The following is what Karl Barth says (Next slide).



“The historical Jesus as such had removed the veil of the merely “historical” from their eyes and came to them as the Lord, the same yesterday and today. This was the burden of the apostolic account of the resurrection, of their Easter history. The limitation of the past had been burst. The past of Jesus had become a present reality”

(From Church Dogmatics, volume III.2 p. 472)

The fact that Jesus revealed himself as the new reality does not do away with the Old Testament. It reflects a continuity of God’s plan to reconcile humanity to himself in Jesus.

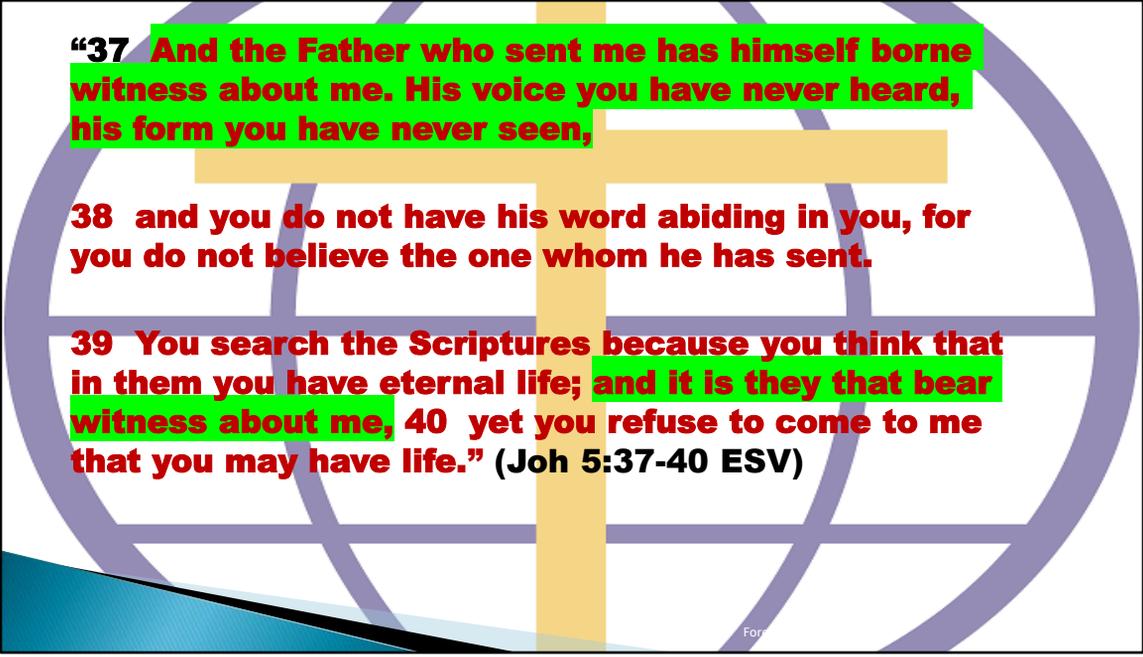
The apostles were inspired to proclaim **Jesus as the Lord, the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world (idem page 473).**

Through the message of the apostles, because they met Jesus, we can be assured that Jesus lived in the past, lives today and will live forever.

When we take communion,

1. we look at the past, at the crucifixion of Jesus;
2. we look at the present as we eat the bread, figuratively of the flesh of Jesus and drink the wine, figuratively the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and for our healing;
3. we also look forward to his glorious return at the end of this age.

We also read and trust the Old Testament, realizing what Jesus said to the religious people of his day, (next slide)



“37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen,

38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (Joh 5:37-40 ESV)

Very clear that salvation is not in the Scriptures but in Jesus. The Scriptures are God's communication to us in human words to reveal who he is.

As God's people, we are indeed very privileged, again not because we deserve anything but because of God's great mercy.

(Next slide)

“1 ¶ For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,

3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” (Eph 3:1-5 ESV)

What is this mystery? (next slide)

WHAT IS THIS MYSTERY?

- ▶ **“24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,**
- ▶ **25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,**
- ▶ **26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.**
- ▶ **27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:24-27 ESV)**

This is the wonderful hope that we have which was revealed to the apostle Paul by Jesus himself.

Jesus comes to live in us through the Holy Spirit!

Jesus disappeared in the tomb. He was the sole representative of Israel who had lived a perfect life. Because he lived a perfect life, it could not be the end of him. Death had no hold on him. The sins that he carried on the cross were our own. In his resurrection, he became Victor over sin and death for all of us!

He represents all of us perfectly.

We do not know what lies ahead of us in this life. It is very important to realize that should we go through enormous problems like the young man Richard did, we are not to give up. In the darkest hours of our lives, Jesus is always present with his church and with each and every one of us as we place our faith and trust in him. He is faithful and trustworthy!

The disciples going to Emmaus also lost hope. They could not see Jesus alive nor

could they believe at the time. Their unbelief did not stop the fact that Jesus lived presently in their lives just as he lives presently in ours!

Let us ask him for the strengths to live by faith and not by sight. Our not seeing doesn't stop the fact that he lives and that he is working his wonderful plan for each and every one of us.

A Christian lady that we know was told by her doctor that her condition was possibly fatal. She was clearly told that she might die on the operating table. The doctor told her the reality of this important and delicate operation. The danger of this operation might include death.

She told the doctor that if she survived the operation, she would be happy because she would be with her family. If she died she also would be happy. She told the doctor of her assurance of being with Jesus should physical death be her lot.

She survived the operation. Because of other circumstances, she is living under much duress. She continues trusting in Christ faithfulness.

God has given us the gift of faith. He has revealed himself to us through the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to always rely on his strength to see us through what come may!

On their way to Emmaus, the disciples' despair was transformed to joy and hope by the living Jesus. This was their "**today**".

This is our "**today**". The living Jesus is with us and in us, as we place our trust in him in faith? He is faithful forevermore?

Let us be thankful and pray!