

CHAPTER 61

**THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

LUKE 24:13-49

**Study Questions**

1. Why did the disciples not believe the testimonies to Jesus' resurrection?
2. How did Jesus lead them to belief?
3. What was the disciples' new task, and how did Jesus prepare them for it?

In the story of the two disciples from Emmaus, we have a picture of the tremendous change which took place on the first day of the week. Luke probably chose to record the story of these two men because he saw in them a symbol of that which happened to all the disciples. In this story we see Jesus' disciples lifted from the depths of despair to the heights of amazed worship as they realize that their Lord is truly alive again.

**Heavy Hearts**

It would be hard to imagine two people more downhearted than were Cleopas and his companion as they began to walk to Emmaus on the afternoon of that first day of the week. They were puzzled, too. During that day strange rumors had passed from disciple to disciple. They had heard the story of the women who had been at the tomb and had seen the angels. But they did not know whether to believe it or not. They were probably afraid to hope lest their hopes should be shattered as they had been before.

When approached by a Stranger who questioned them about their sadness, they were amazed to find that He apparently knew nothing of all the terrible events which had happened during the past few days. So they told Him the whole story—how the great prophet Jesus had been condemned by the religious rulers and had been crucified outside Jerusalem. They were not impartial observers in all this. Their sadness was explained by their dejected testimony: "But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). As far as they were concerned, all was lost when their Master died on the Cross.

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**Burning Hearts**

How shocked these two travelers must have been when this Stranger responded with the words, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25). He told them that it was necessary that all this should take place before the Christ should enter His glory. Then He proceeded to explain the Scriptures to them. Not one or two verses, but passage after passage from the Old Testament was presented and explained until it was crystal-clear that they should have expected just what had actually happened.

No doubt the two disciples felt much better when they arrived in Emmaus. But the revelation which was to eliminate despair and thrill their hearts with joy was yet to come. Having invited the Stranger to spend the night with them, they watched with surprise as He assumed the position of host. He took bread, blessed it, and broke it. And suddenly they realized that they had been walking with the risen Lord. Jesus Himself had instructed them about His death and resurrection. He was certainly alive! And in that moment of wonderful knowledge, the Lord disappeared!

This disappearance did not shatter their new-found joy. The instruction He had given them had transformed their thinking. Their faces aglow with joy, they immediately left their meal and hurried back to Jerusalem to share the glad tidings with the other disciples.

When they returned to Jerusalem, they found others as excited as they were. Their attempts to tell their story were overpowered by voices which said, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34). Finally they had an opportunity to tell the story of what had happened to them on the way to Emmaus.

**The Final Proof**

Suddenly, as Cleopas and his companion were pouring out their story, there was another figure in the room. He had not come through the door. He had simply appeared where no one had been. It was Jesus. For a short time faith and superstition battled. No one was prepared for an appearance like this. But Jesus put them at ease. He showed them His nail-scarred hands and feet. He invited them to touch Him and see that He was not a spirit. He asked for something to eat, and ate in their presence. They were convinced, and all the despair and defeat that had set in when they saw Jesus nailed to the Cross was banished forever.

The change which took place in the disciples is one of the strong-

est evidences of the reality of the Resurrection. We can especially mark the change in Peter. From a weakling who deserted and betrayed his Master, Peter became a rock of courage who defied the same council which had crucified Jesus. But the change is also apparent in the other disciples. In place of despair there was joy. Defeated men were restored to victorious living by the resurrection of Christ. How obvious it becomes that the story put forth by the chief priests was false! Men who know that they are spreading a lie do not experience the change these men knew. There is only one explanation for the radical difference in the disciples—Jesus Christ was risen from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus should have the same effect on us. If we belong to Jesus, sin can never conquer us or destroy us. By His resurrection Jesus shattered the power of sin and death and brought us confidence and joy.

#### **The New Task**

When Jesus appeared to the disciples, it was not only to convince them that He had truly risen from the dead. His resurrection had a special meaning for them. It marked the beginning of a new period in His ministry. When He returned to Heaven, He would continue His work through the disciples. Now He began to prepare them for that work.

To the gathered disciples He began to give the same type of instruction He had given to the two on the road to Emmaus. He interpreted the Scriptures to them. But He also opened their minds so that they could understand His instructions. Throughout His public ministry their minds were often closed to the truth. The traditional Jewish teaching, which they had heard all their lives, had made it difficult for them to realize the full spiritual meaning of Jesus' words. Now He touched their hearts and opened their minds, and the truth suddenly became real to them.

Jesus gave them a new commission at this time. He told them, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). The Greek word for "send" is the word from which we get our English word "apostle." Jesus was now commissioning them as His apostles. He was the Father's apostle, sent into the world to carry out the plan of redemption. Now the disciples were to become Christ's apostles, sent out to all the world with the message of Christ's redeeming work.

To this commission Jesus added the power by which they were to carry out the commission. "He breathed on them, and saith

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unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Although the full power of the Holy Spirit was not to be theirs until Pentecost, they already were to receive the Spirit. And with the gift of the Spirit came the assurance that they were to serve as Christ's representatives on earth. As He had the power to forgive sins, He now gave them the power to assure men that their sins were forgiven.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was symbolized by Jesus' breathing on them. The same Hebrew word means both breath and spirit. So Jesus was picturing for them the transfer of the Spirit. The Spirit had come upon Him without measure; now He was bestowing it upon them. As He had ministered in the Spirit's power, so they were to serve as His ambassadors in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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**Chapter Checkup**

1. How did Jesus meet the two disciples from Emmaus?
2. What did they tell Him had happened in Jerusalem?
3. What instruction did He give them?
4. How did they recognize Him?
5. What happened when they recognized Him?
6. Why did they return to Jerusalem?
7. What appearance of Jesus did the eleven disciples report?
8. How did the disciples react when Jesus appeared in the midst of them?
9. How did Jesus prove He was not a spirit?
10. What did Jesus teach the disciples?
11. What commission was given at this time?
12. Why did Jesus give the disciples the Holy Spirit?

**For Further Study**

1. What is the difference between the unbelief of the religious leaders and the unbelief of the two disciples?
2. Contrast the Roman Catholic and Reformed views about the commission which Christ gave to His apostles. To whom was it given and to whom does it come today?
3. What effect should the resurrection of Christ have upon us?