

“The Covenant of Resurrection: From Heartbreak to Heartburn”

Have you ever noticed that some of the saddest words in our language begin with the letter D? Disappointment, disillusionment, doubt, despair, defeat, death – all of which must have been in the air as these two men walked along. They had left the dispirited band of disciples with the events of Friday fresh in their memories. The Master they loved and revered had been horribly put to death - a cruel death of the most degrading kind. Now, their longed-for deliverer lay dead in a sealed tomb! Their hopes were dashed; the dream was over. The reports that Jesus’ tomb was empty only seemed to confuse them more. Their entire world had come apart.

These two had erected a wall of hopelessness around them, and they were trapped in their misery. *“We had hoped that he was the one ...”* That is, “We don’t expect it now, but once we did. We had it, this thing called hope, but now it’s gone.” I wonder if this is something that we can identify with? If so, just wait, the heart-break is about to change.

As the travelers make their weary way to Emmaus, a stranger comes alongside them. Somehow, they don’t recognize it is Jesus. It wasn’t that they were too preoccupied to look him in the eye. No, this knowledge was kept from them for a reason.

The stranger asks, *“What are you discussing together as you walk along?”* (17) Cleopas is shocked at even being asked: *“Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there?”* (18) Jesus patiently asks, *“What things?”* *“About Jesus! He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”* (19) He “was.” Their experience of Jesus was in the *past*. The Cross had taken him from them, and their minds couldn’t make sense of it. *The pain of the past prevented them from seeing the miracle in their midst.* [P]

But then Jesus asks, “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things?” (v. 26) Jesus takes hold of their bewilderment and sorrow and gives them a heart-searching experience. How does he do it? He points them to God’s **covenantal** love – how everything that has transpired over the centuries, all that has been revealed through the Scriptures – points to the Christ as the One at the center of God’s redemptive plan – the One foreshadowed in the Old Covenant, the One who fulfills the Old Covenant, and the One who establishes the New. Verse 27 – “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

To help the two followers see, Jesus reviews the entire history of God’s **covenant** with His people, connecting the dots for them, shedding glorious light on God’s plan for the Messiah. If we look close enough, we will see again & again how the Old Testament points ultimately to Christ as the One who fulfills and renews God’s covenant with us.

We see it with *Noah* in Genesis 9 – “I establish My covenant with you ... never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” But sin was not eliminated. It has spread just as before the days of the flood. How can God make a covenant not to cleanse the world again in such a way? Because he provided that cleansing through the One who never sinned – the Christ ... “There is a fountain filled with *blood* drawn from Immanuel’s veins, and sinners plunged beneath that *flood* lose all their guilty stains.” [P]

God made a Covenant with *Abram* in Gen. 15 – “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.” The LORD said, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram.” Abram brought these to him, cut them in two & arranged the halves opposite each other. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick darkness came over him ... Then a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.”

Why were the animals cut in two and arranged on opposite sides? When such a covenant was made, those entering this covenant would walk between the pieces, signifying, “If I break this covenant, may it be to me as these split animals.” But what about the smoking firepot and blazing torch? Throughout the Bible, both smoke and fire are witnessed again and again as theophany – a manifestation of God’s presence.

But what is strange in Genesis 15 is that it is not Abram, the man, the sinner, who passes between the pieces. The presence of the holy, unchanging God passes between them. Why? Because our God knew we would break the covenant – and so, in this moment, He is proclaiming: “I will take upon Myself the curse – I will bear your sin – I will die your death.” Jesus, still a stranger to the travelers, points to Scriptures like this and says, “See this ... this is about the Christ!”

Then God made a Covenant with *Moses* in Exodus 19 – “If you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me ... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” And yet God’s people turned from Him and broke His covenant time and time and time again. And yet, in His faithfulness and mercy, God still treasured His people; He kept bringing them back. How was God able to take them back – take *us* back – and still be holy, still be just? Because of the One who came to obey the Law completely – who fulfilled it and remained faithful to it. The Christ serves as our representative of righteousness, as well as the One who bore the penalty for our unrighteousness. [P] The Law only reminded us of our sin, and that it leads to death. But then One came who lived in complete faithfulness, so that He could *bear* our death ... and *overcome* our death ... to establish a *greater* Covenant.

But before that, God made a covenant with *David* in 2 Sam. 7 – “I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you ... I will establish the throne of

his kingdom forever ...” This promise of an eternal kingdom is fulfilled in Christ, who is of David’s line. Luke 1: *“The angel said to Mary, ‘You will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David ... His kingdom will have no end.’*

We hear those words at the beginning of Jesus’ life (womb). And we hear another proclamation near the end of it, as he enters Jerusalem to die – *“Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”* They were hailing him as their king. But their magnifying would quickly turn to mockery as the one hailed King of the Jews hung crucified. The Christ would bear a crown – but first it would be one of thorns – the one that should have been ours. But because he humbled himself & became obedient to death, He was raised in newness of life, so that He would be exalted to the highest place and given the name that is above every name! We know His name! [P]

Finally, there was the promise of the *New Covenant* in Jer. 31 – *“The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant ... not like the covenant that I made when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt ... I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts ... they all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

Again, this promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, for it is through Him we receive forgiveness of sin and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who enables us to seek after the things of God. But this could only be accomplished through the Messiah – through the One able to bear sin, conquer death, and reign victorious! [P]

And so was told the story of the cosmic struggle between good and evil, sin and atonement, death and life. Here was proof that Jesus had fulfilled what had been

prophesied over the centuries; that these Old Testament anticipations of his work of deliverance proved that he was indeed the Messiah.

I imagine these two disciples absolutely speechless as Jesus unfolds God's grand redemptive story, showing how it all points to the Christ crucified and risen. Jesus asked them plainly, *"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"*

The problem for the disciples was how to make sense of the Cross, how to accept it. Jesus helped them to do that, showing them that *the Cross itself was the creative act of God. The Cross of suffering and shame had become the Cross of salvation.*

Their two-hour journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus must have seemed like two minutes, being so wrapped up in this absorbing conversation with the Lord, whom they still hadn't recognized! [P] We are told that *"As they approached the village, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. They urged him strongly, 'Stay with us!'* And he does.

A meal is prepared. The time for Jesus' disclosure has come. How does he do it? *"He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them"* (v. 30). These actions, these words, so familiar ... What was it that Jesus had said in that upper room a few days ago? Luke 22 – *"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."* And ***he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."*** After supper, he took the cup, saying, *"This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

Those words! Those nail-pierced hands! In that moment, *"Their eyes were opened and they recognized him."* All this time they had been with Jesus, looking at Him, but never seeing Him. Now, *as they break bread together (New Covenant)*, they see Him for who He is. [P] But this was more than a mere recognition of His features.

They became aware of Jesus in all His magnificence as the Messiah, the Son of God, and their *Risen Lord!* In an instant, they knew Him. [P] And in an instant, He's gone.

I can imagine Cleopas and his friend standing in amazement, asking each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (v. 32) *He is the Resurrection and the Life! He has provided us a new covenant ... a better covenant ... a lasting covenant ... one of resurrection!* [Pause]

That heart-burning experience is something that we all need. We need it to realize that Jesus *is* the only Savior and the Risen Lord! [P] Where are we in our experience? Are we still heart-breaking because we need to meet the risen Christ? [P] Or, have we've lost sight of Christ amidst the struggles of life? Then perhaps we need to do some heart-searching. [P] If so, let it continue, as it will surely lead to the heart-burning we all need.

The Emmaus Two, no doubt, had walked this way many times before. Yet this day was different – it was time for a life-changing encounter with the Risen Lord. [Pause]

He draws near to us as well. He lays questions on our hearts. He opens the Word to us through the power of His Spirit. [P] Are we listening to Him as we walk along? [P] Are we inviting Him in so that He can transform our hearts and minds for His glory?

How long has it been since you felt that burning in your heart, that stirring in your soul? I don't know about you, but I don't just want eyes that look – I want eyes that see! I don't just want a heart that beats – I want one that burns with the love of Christ – a love that died for us, a love that rose for us, a love that sends us out to tell the world – "It's true! Christ has risen from the dead! He is alive! He is alive! Let's pray.

O Lord, wake us up this morning. Give us eyes that see and hearts that burn. Give us souls that yearn to serve and to tell the world that our Lord is alive! Amen.