

The Gospel According to
Luke

“40 Days of Jesus”

Chapter 24:36-53

Introduction

After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus liked to “pop-in” unannounced on His followers:

1. The women who first went to the tomb found it empty. Jesus suddenly appeared to Mary Magdalene and asked her why she was weeping, and who she was seeking. She did not recognize Him; she thought He was the gardener. When He spoke her name, something about it opened her eyes and understanding and she knew it was the Lord.
2. Earlier in this chapter we saw how Jesus suddenly came alongside two disciples who were walking home on the road to Emmaus. Again they did not recognize Him until after He came into their home. When Jesus blessed and broke bread, something about it opened their eyes and understanding and they knew it was the Lord.
3. Another time during the forty-days, seven of the disciples were fishing. They caught nothing all night. In the morning, suddenly Jesus was standing on the shore – but they did not recognize Him. He told them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship. They did so, and brought in a huge haul of fish. Then their eyes and understanding were opened, and they knew it was the Lord.

In the verses we've read, Jesus suddenly popped-in while the disciples were gathered together. A week later He would appear like this again, suddenly through closed doors, and present Himself to these same men along with Thomas, who initially doubted that the Lord was alive.

The emotional effect of these appearances is captured in a strangely beautiful phrase in verse forty-one, which says, **they still did not believe for joy, and marveled**. It's a way of saying that what they

experienced was too good to be true – **yet they knew it was true.** It was unbelievably true, if that makes any sense. They believed Jesus was alive, and knew it to be true – but it's implications were so fantastic that they overflowed with supernatural joy.

There is certainly a sense in these closing verses of *commission* and *mission*. But the real theme is **joy** – a supernatural joy that permeates your life because it is almost too good to be true that Jesus is alive.

We'll organize our thoughts around these two points: #1 The Joy of Knowing Jesus Is Almost Beyond Belief, and #2 The Joy of Showing Jesus Is Always Beyond Ability.

#1 The Joy of Knowing Jesus Is Almost Beyond Belief (v36-43)

When is the last time you considered how really unbelievable it is that you know Jesus? You were born with a sin nature; you committed innumerable sins. You were lost and without hope of salvation. Then Jesus revealed Himself to you! You realized that He took your place on the Cross at Calvary, dying as your Sacrifice and Substitute. Not by any works that you could or must do, but by faith alone in His work on the Cross, you were justified before God and received the forgiveness of your sins. You were born-again and God the Holy Spirit came to live within you.

That's was just the beginning! God gave you gifts so that you could serve Him by serving others in His name. Every day He is at work in your life to change you to become more-and-more the person you were created to be. One day you will awaken in a glorious afterlife, in a new and perfect body, to share eternity with your Lord.

It would all be too good to be true – **if it wasn't for the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive.**

Jesus had just popped-in on the two heading home to Emmaus. Surprised by joy, they ran back the 7-miles to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples. When they arrived they found out that Jesus had

popped-in on Mary Magdalene and Peter. As they spoke, **He popped-in again!**

Luke 24:36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “**Peace to you.**”

One minute He wasn't there; the next, He was. It's a clue to the kind of body Jesus has. We're interested in His body because we, too, will be raised with that kind of body. It's real; it's physical; but it doesn't seem to be restricted by the normal physical laws of our universe.

Jesus' words are so precious. Here was a group of people who included those who had fled and abandoned Him; it included one who had denied Him; all of them were in hiding, from fear. Jesus intended to set them all immediately at ease by proclaiming **Peace**:

1. He had made **peace** with God for them and the whole human race.
2. He was at **peace** with them, having forgiven them their sins.
3. They could experience the **peace** of God now and forever.

Peace didn't immediately sink-in:

Luke 24:37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.

Some organizations that rate movies for parents have a category called 'jump scenes.' They are scenes in the movie that might make you jump out of your seat. Jesus' sudden appearance was a real-life jump scene for those gathered together.

Luke 24:38 And He said to them, “**Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?**”

Luke 24:39 **Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.**”

Luke 24:40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

Luke 24:41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “**Have you any food here?**”

Luke 24:42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.

Luke 24:43 And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

How patient and gentle are the ways of Jesus with His disciples. He allows for their sincere fears, and overcomes them with simple fellowship. He eats with them – not because He must, but to show that He is both real and ready to fellowship with them.

It was 40-days of Jesus. The Lord popped-in on them to spend time with them. While spending time, He taught, encouraged, and exhorted.

Spend time with Jesus. The meal you'll share with Him is in His Word. He'll use it to teach, encourage, and exhort you. And here is something to consider: Even though Jesus is always with you, you can still enjoy pop-ins from time to time. I know there are times for me, when studying, that the Lord suddenly opens my eyes to something about Him in His Word. In your area of gifting He wants to do the same.

#2 The Joy of Showing Jesus Is Always Beyond Ability (v44-53)

Jesus was *commissioning* them to send them on a *mission*. They would start in **Jerusalem** and go to all **nations** preaching **repentance and remission of sins**. They were to do it as **witnesses**. They were to go about showing people the things they had experienced and received.

They could not do it at all, however, without being **endued with power**. In other words, the joy of showing Jesus was (and is) beyond all natural ability.

Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, "**These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.**"

Luke 24:45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

These guys and gals knew Scripture! They had large portions of the **Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms** memorized. Jesus **opened their understanding** to the full meaning of Scripture by revealing Himself as the subject of Scripture. When we teach God's

Word, it better have something to do with Jesus. When we study for ourselves, we'd better be looking for Jesus.

Let's say you get a love-letter from your beloved, who is for some reason far away. You might be interested in the geography he or she describes; or the climate; or the history; or the kind of currency they use; or the language spoken. But you're only interested in them incidentally, in terms of how your beloved is affected by them. Too often, when reading the Bible, **we concentrate on the incidentals and forget our Beloved.**

Luke 24:46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

Luke 24:47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 And you are witnesses of these things.

Thus it is written is an assurance available *only* to Bible-believing Christians. You can be absolutely certain, by many infallible proofs, that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Jesus summarized the Old Testament by saying **it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day**. God promised to send Someone to redeem and save lost mankind. That Someone would need to suffer by taking the place of men and women who deserved judgment and death. But He would triumph over judgment and death by being raised from the dead. There is a sense in which the entire Old Testament tells that single, unfolding story of redemption.

Jesus set the stage for the New Testament by saying **that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**. Beginning with the Book of Acts, that is exactly what occurred – **and is still occurring!**

At the heart of it all is the fact that believers are **witnesses of these things**. God's plan to spread this Good News is that you and I show it to be true in and through our everyday lives.

How can your everyday life make you a witness? It can when it's not you living it!

Luke 24:49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

The **Promise of My Father** is a reference to God the Holy Spirit coming upon them to **endue** them with heavenly **power**. They could do nothing of any real significance without this empowering. They were saved; the Holy Spirit was already within them; and Jesus had opened-up their understanding of Scripture. But without this further experience with the Holy Spirit – *they could not be witnesses!*

Christians must constantly be aware of the danger that, having begun in the Spirit, we want to continue by our own efforts, and in our own energies. For example: We develop elaborate systems of evangelizing others; then teach seminars so that folks can learn the ‘proper’ techniques. Vance Havner once remarked that people don’t come to Jesus at the end of an argument, but as a result of your testimony. They see something extraordinary about your ordinary life and the way you live, and they desire it – realizing it cannot be learned or earned, but only given by grace in a relationship with the living God.

I’m not saying it is wrong to study; or to hone your skills in sharing your faith; or to learn to defend your faith. Everything has its place. What I am saying is that your confidence is in receiving power from on high, *not* in your own always limited abilities. Men and women do not come to know Jesus because of our knowledge and skill; they come because of our love for them flowing out of a life of joy from knowing the Lord.

Luke 24:50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

Luke 24:51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Luke knows that he is going to write another account of the ascension of Jesus into Heaven in the opening chapter of the Book of Acts. He gives you just enough of it to whet your appetite to read volume two! His focus here is on the condition of the disciples left behind:

Luke 24:52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
Luke 24:53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

If you like formulas, here's a simple one to follow:

1. Jesus has **blessed** you. Think of it as a summary of the multitude of promises and blessings that belong to you as a Christian.
2. You **worship** Him.
3. You go back to where you live and work filled with **great joy**.
4. Every chance you get, you go to where you can **praise** and **bless God** together with other believers.
5. As you **praise** and **bless God**, you realize again how much Jesus has **blessed** you... **And it all repeats over-and-over again!**

We have an admiration for natural talents and abilities in others. The NFL is in the middle of play-offs for the Super Bowl. Some of you admire the amazing on-the-field exploits of these athletes. Maybe football is not your thing. You admire great acting... Or singing... Or beauty... Or oratory. Super-stars in these fields only exist because of our innate admiration for natural talents and abilities.

You need to ignore all that when it comes to Christianity! Natural talents and abilities can be a hindrance rather than a help. While I think all of us should always be learning more, and studying hard – our real impact on individuals, and on society, is from showing them the extraordinary effect Jesus has upon our ordinary lives. It's from being **witnesses** – 24-7 – of what life is like knowing that Jesus is alive.

The joy of showing Jesus is always beyond our ability. It will always require power from Heaven. I, for one, am glad. I can offer my meager talents and abilities to the Lord and trust He will use me in spite of them.

It may sound odd... And I don't want to confuse anyone... But there is a sense in which we should remain believers who find it hard to **believe for joy, and marvel** at what Jesus has done. The joy of knowing Jesus is almost beyond belief.

Applying the Word...

If you are a Christian, Jesus has blessed you; you should worship Him. Everything else follows from those two things. If something seems out-of-whack in your walk, start there. Your earthly circumstances may be blocking-out your understanding of blessing. You have every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Set your affections higher – on things above – and you will be flooded with joy.

If you are not yet saved... You are a sinner in need of saving, before it becomes too late. Where else but in Jesus are you going to find the remission of your sins?

Nowhere! So why not repent of them – agreeing with God you are a sinner, and calling upon Him to save you. It's the greatest pop-in of all!