

It's All About Jesus

Session 6

April 7, 2024

The Mission of Jesus Shared

Session Point: The truth about Jesus is too big to keep to ourselves.

Session Passage: Luke 24:44-53

Luke 24:44-45

Connection to the Point. Jesus fulfilled all that was written about Him in the Old Testament.

Setting for Luke 24:44-53. Previously, Luke reported on Jesus's resurrection appearances to the disciples in the evening of resurrection day. The Eleven apostles and other disciples were present in Jerusalem in a room behind locked doors because they feared the Jews (v. 33; John 20:19). As they listened to the report of Cleopas and another disciple about their interaction with the resurrected Jesus while traveling to Emmaus, Jesus Himself appeared to these disciples (Luke 24:35-36). By talking with them, showing His wounds, and eating a piece of fish, Jesus demonstrated the reality that He was physically present and was not a ghost or an illusion (v. 37).

He told them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you" (v. 44). Jesus continued to address the disciples' disbelief (v. 41) and convince them of His physical presence by allowing them to see and touch Him (vv. 39-40), then eating (vv. 41-43). He reminded the disciples of what He had said prior to His suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. *While I was still with you* refers to Jesus's words prior to His crucifixion and resurrection. As previous verses indicate, in no way do these words imply Jesus was not physically present with them that Sunday evening. Likely Jesus was preparing them for the time when He would not be present physically with them, about forty days from that time. By using the phrase *my words*, Jesus could have been referring specifically to His mission of voluntarily surrendering to God's plan for Him to "suffer and rise from the dead the third day" (v. 46). However, His next words suggest He was speaking about all He had taught the disciples during His three-year ministry. In the remaining words of verse 44, Luke continued to support this more comprehensive interpretation.

Everything written about me (v. 44). Using this resurrection appearance as a teaching opportunity, Jesus pointed the disciples' attention to what had been written about Him. In doing so, He was directing them away from their emotional response in seeing Him and toward a better understanding of His mission. As the next few words in Luke indicate, the phrase refers to Scripture.

In the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (v. 44). Jesus used this phrase to refer to the whole of the Scripture written at that time, the Old Testament. The Jews divided the Old Testament into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (or Psalms, referring to the largest book in this section). This is the only place in the New Testament where all three divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament are specified; usually only the Law and Prophets are mentioned. This may be because the Jews did not finalize the books in the "Writings" section until about AD 90 (perhaps in response to New Testament books).

Must be fulfilled (v. 44). The Greek word translated *must* here can also be rendered *it is necessary* and refers to an obligation or requirement. *Be fulfilled* refers to Jesus's completion of prophecies that referred to Him. This Greek verb is used eighty-six times in seventeen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament. These numbers demonstrate that fulfillment of prophecy was a consistent emphasis by New Testament writers, especially in reference to Jesus's life and ministry. Jesus—His birth, life, ministry, teaching, suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection—is the focal point in human history.

Then he opened their minds (v. 45). Luke did not specify exactly what Jesus did to open their minds. Perhaps part of this opening of their minds involved the presence of the Holy Spirit in a way these disciples had not previously experienced. (The opening chapters of Luke's next volume, Acts, specifies other ways the disciples experienced the Holy Spirit.) Perhaps what Jesus said or did referred to His teaching them how to understand Scripture (the Old Testament as identified in the remainder of this verse) more accurately. Whatever Jesus said or did helped His followers to think in a new way. They had a new understanding of what they had failed to grasp over the previous several years. These disciples gained this new understanding of Scripture not through their own study, but rather through Jesus's revelation, when He opened their minds.

Understand the Scriptures (v. 45). Jesus's stated purpose was to help all these disciples understand God's written Word, especially as it related to His fulfillment of it, as we will see in the next section of verses. This phrase depicts the same thing Jesus did with Cleopas and another disciple earlier that afternoon (v. 27). Properly understood, Scripture points to Jesus.

Luke 24:46-47

Connection to the Point. The death and resurrection of Jesus is to be proclaimed.

He also said to them (v. 46). Jesus had already opened the disciples' minds to a better understanding of the Old Testament by explaining various ways He had fulfilled Scripture (vv. 44-45). From there, He continued by laying out the heart of the gospel message.

This is what is written (v. 46). This phrase (or something very similar) is frequently found in the New Testament as an introduction to quoting or referencing a particular Old Testament verse or passage. The New Testament writers' frequent use of this phrase reveals their view of the importance of Scripture.

The Messiah will suffer (v. 46). The Jews of Jesus's day were looking for Messiah or Christ. However, they believed Messiah would be a political/military leader who would restore Israel's independence from Rome and establish an earthly kingdom similar to David's kingdom in the Old Testament. Throughout His ministry, Jesus rejected popular misconceptions about who God's Messiah would be. Early in His ministry following His baptism and temptations, Jesus began preaching and teaching in Galilee (Luke 4:14-15). Luke reported that Jesus then went to His hometown, Nazareth, and preached (vv. 16-21). Jesus focused on a passage from the prophet Isaiah to describe the kind of Messiah He would be. Possibly in part because of the Jews' misconceptions about who Messiah would be, opposition developed (v. 28) and they attempted to kill Jesus (v. 29). As Jesus taught His disciples, He explained His Messiahship on numerous occasions (9:22,44; 17:25; 18:31-33; 22:37), but they failed to understand until He "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" on the evening of resurrection day (24:45).

And rise from the dead the third day (v. 46). According to Jewish time calculation, Jesus was in the tomb three days (part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday). One aspect of the gospel message is that Jesus would suffer and be crucified. But it is not the full message; the gospel is not complete without Jesus's resurrection. It is the proof He is who He said He is. Jesus's resurrection serves as the affirmation and verification that all He said was true. During the first century AD, a number of Jews claimed to be God's Messiah. They were killed—and they stayed dead. Not so with Jesus! God raised Him from the dead early that Sunday morning. The apostle Paul compared Jesus's resurrection with the Jewish offering of firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20,23). This offering was a down payment Jews made when they took to the priest the firstfruits plants produced to show they would bring their whole tithe when the full harvest was complete. Paul wrote that Jesus's resurrection demonstrated God had accepted Jesus's atoning sacrifice of Himself for humanity's sin, and that, at the final

resurrection, God would raise those who had died in Christ. The cross *and* resurrection are central to the gospel message.

And repentance (v. 47). In this verse, Jesus shifted His focus from the historical aspects of the gospel message to the individual person's response to it. Many people think of repentance as feeling sorry for something they've done. That's not how the Bible defines repentance. Biblical repentance focuses on a change in a person's mind/heart and how that change results in different actions in his or her life. If there is no change in our behavior, there has been no repentance. The word picture behind the Greek word translated *repentance* is of a person who is walking in one direction who then stops, does an about face, and walks in the completely opposite direction. From Matthew through Revelation, the word translated *repent* or *repentance* is used fifty-six times. Repentance is our initial step in responding to the gospel. Until we repent, until our minds/hearts are changed so that our actions change, we have not shown God that we have genuinely repented.

For forgiveness of sins (v. 47). Jesus listed the purpose of repentance as the forgiveness of sins, something only God can do. Once we repent, however, God forgives our sins (1 John 1:9; "confess" means *to agree with God*). As God puts it, He will remember our sins no more (Jer. 31:34) and remove them "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:12).

Will be proclaimed in his name (v. 47). This message of repentance resulting in God's forgiveness of sins was a part of the gospel message to be proclaimed in His name. Whenever we read the New Testament phrase *in his name*, we should think of that which is reflective of Jesus's character or in agreement with who Jesus is. Proclaiming the gospel message falls short of what Jesus intended without proclaiming repentance resulting in God's forgiveness of sins.

To all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem (v. 47). In speaking to these disciples, Jesus commanded that they preach the gospel to everyone. Jesus intended that the gospel should spread like a powerful wave, flowing from Jerusalem to *all the nations*. Jesus's mission for His followers of that day continues to be our mission today as the next section of verses reveals.

Luke 24:48-53

Connection to the Point. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit who would empower the disciples to share His witness.

You are witnesses of these things (v. 48). Neither Luke nor Jesus specified what Jesus was referring to by using the words *these things*. Perhaps He was referring to: (1) the historical facts of the gospel (His suffering, death, and resurrection; v. 46), (2) a person's response to the gospel (repentance and God's forgiveness of sins; v. 47), or (3) the proclamation of the gospel to all people (vv. 47-49). Probably He was referring to all three of these possibilities. Jesus stated that everyone gathered that Sunday evening (possibly the 120 people Luke mentioned in Acts 1:15) were witnesses of what He said. A witness is someone who tells what he or she has seen or experienced. We get our English word *martyr* from the Greek word translated *witness* because from the first to third centuries many Christians were killed for their witness to their faith. This is still true in many places in our world today. More Christians were killed for their faith in the 20th century than in the previous nineteen centuries combined.¹

And look, I am sending you what my Father promised (v. 49). Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to carry on His work (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). Luke's second volume, Acts, reveals how the Holy Spirit continued Jesus's work through His followers' mission—particularly the proclaiming of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the world. In Acts 2, we see the coming of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of God's promise and the

proclamation of the gospel to people from many nations. In the second century AD, we see evidence of Christians in those locations mentioned in Acts 2:9-11.

As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high (v. 49). When the Holy Spirit came, He would give them the power they needed to be witnesses for Jesus. To be effective witnesses, we need that same Holy Spirit to convict us, teach us, and empower us to be the kind of witnesses Jesus desires. We see the fulfillment of this promise in Acts 2 on Pentecost, celebrated fifty days after Passover (the day after Jesus was crucified on Friday, possibly in April of AD 30).

Then he led them out to the vicinity of Bethany (v. 50). Bethany was a small village on the Mount of Olives on the road to Jericho, less than two miles southeast of Jerusalem. Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, as well as Simon the leper. Several events in the New Testament occurred in or around Bethany. We might assume that Jesus led the group gathered in Jerusalem that Sunday evening immediately to Bethany. However, our assumption is likely incorrect; most people at that time did not walk any distance at night. The word *then* refers to the next event that happened, without specific reference to an exact time. Since we know the Bible does not contain errors, this helps us to understand the timing of Jesus's other resurrection appearances as described in Matthew, John, and other New Testament books.

And lifting up his hands he blessed them (v. 50). When they were addressing God, Jews usually prayed with their hands lifted up toward heaven. When blessing someone, the person doing the blessing frequently placed hands on the head of the person being blessed. A blessing frequently involved asking God to help the other person, often a close friend or offspring, by empowering that person for a specific task. By this time, the disciples were close to Jesus, having spent about three years with Him.

And while he was blessing them, he left them and was carried up into heaven (v. 51). The word *while* implies that Jesus's blessings took some time, as would a father's blessings for his children. Perhaps Jesus gave each disciple a blessing that focused on his or her specific needs and mission. Neither Matthew nor John recorded Jesus's ascension into heaven. Luke's final chapter of his Gospel account and the first few chapters of Acts focus on events in and around Jerusalem. Luke recorded Jesus's ascension twice (Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:9-11), mentioning different details each time. The Gospel accounts of Matthew and John focus more on Jesus's resurrection appearances in Galilee (a region north of Judea and Samaria). Many people assume that Jesus ascended into heaven after giving The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) in Galilee, but Matthew actually ended his Gospel account without mentioning Jesus's ascension. A careful reading and proper understanding of New Testament chronology reveals that no conflict exists between our Gospel writers' accounts.

After worshiping him (v. 52). This is Luke's first mention of worshiping Jesus. Jewish worship frequently involved prayer, a statement of faith, Scripture reading, a brief explanation of Scripture, and singing of a psalm. However, Luke did not specify exactly how these disciples worshiped Jesus.

They returned to Jerusalem with great joy (v. 52). Although Jesus was no longer physically present with these disciples, He would be spiritually present with them through the Holy Spirit. The *great joy* Luke referenced here may have resulted from their (1) new knowledge of how to understand Scripture better (v. 45), (2) comprehension of Jesus's completed mission (v. 46), (3) understanding of salvation (v. 47), (4) commission as witnesses (v. 48), (5) promise of the Holy Spirit to empower them (v. 49), (6) blessing by Jesus (v. 50), or (7) being privileged to witness as Jesus ascended into heaven (v. 51). Likely, this great joy resulted from all seven of these things. When we are rightly related to Jesus, we, too, experience great joy.

And they were continually in the temple praising God (v. 53). Luke began his Gospel account by describing an event at the temple in Jerusalem (the angel speaking to Zechariah). Luke closed his Gospel account in a similar

manner, by referring to the disciples being continually in the temple praising God. The impact this praising of God had on the Jews in Jerusalem very well may have contributed to three thousand people being saved after Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:41).

1. "Modern Persecution," www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1901-2000/modern-persecution-11630665.html