

BEFORE AND AFTER

“ . . . but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24:21)

You probably know the story. On the day Jesus came out of the tomb, two men were on their way to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. One of them was named Cleopas and the other remains anonymous. As they were discussing everything that had recently happened, Jesus, Himself started walking with them. Their eyes were holden, however, so that they did not recognize Him (Lk 24:16). Mark explains that Jesus appeared to them in a “different form” (Mk. 16:12). They were obviously discouraged and Luke reminds us that their faces were “downcast” (Lk. 24:17).

When Jesus inquired about their conversation they made an embarrassing, but common mistake. They assumed that Jesus didn’t know what they knew. Thus they said: **“Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”** In reality, Jesus was the only one who really knew what happened! These poor discouraged souls didn’t have a clue that Jesus had just entered into the Holy Place not made by hands, destroyed death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).

It was then that they repeated their second hand knowledge of what Jesus had just experienced in person. Sadly, they admitted that they had “hoped” the man Who was crucified was going to redeem Israel. They had heard a rumor of the resurrection but really didn’t believe it.

At this point Jesus said: **“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25-27).**

When they arrived in Emmaus and sat down to eat, Jesus took the bread and gave thanks. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Then Jesus disappeared out of their sight. It is interesting to note that while they had walked and talked with Jesus, and even heard Jesus expound the Scriptures, they didn’t recognize Him until they ate with Him. No wonder the early church came together to “break bread” (Acts 20:7).

Before they believed in the resurrection they were downcast and discouraged. After they had seen the risen Christ, however, a marvelous transformation took place. Suddenly they remembered how their hearts burned within them as they walked and talked with Jesus. No matter how tired they were, nor how late the hour, they immediately returned to Jerusalem to give this “good news” to the apostles. The apostles, however, had already heard that the Lord had risen and appeared unto Peter.

While they were talking, Jesus Himself appeared in their midst. He not only showed them his hands and feet, but even ate a piece of broiled fish to prove that He was not a ghost. Jesus proceeded to open their minds and explain that what had just happened was a fulfillment of what had been predicted in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Lk. 24:44-47)

Let us not lose sight, however, of the dramatic difference between how these men felt “before” they believed in the resurrection and “after”. Before, they were downcast and discouraged. After, it was as though they had the wings of an eagle and run and not grow weary, and walk and not faint (Is. 40:31).

Remember that Jesus was crucified between two thieves (Matt. 27:38). Initially, both robbers heaped insults upon Jesus (Matt. 27:44). As they day wore on, however, one of the robbers began to have second thoughts. He rebuked his fellow criminal for criticizing Christ and said: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”. Jesus answered him: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:42, 43).

What happens to you “before” and “after” you believe is also of eternal significance!