

## **Jesus In Disguise**

### **Luke 24:13-35**

#### **Introduction**

In Luke's gospel there are four post-resurrection appearances; the first appearance takes place when the women carry spices for the anointing of Jesus's body (vv.1-12). In the second appearance Jesus joins two believers deeply troubled; discussing the events surrounding the death of Jesus (vv.13-16). The reunion turns into a request when Jesus asks why they are so sad (v.17); and their reply surrounds the events of Jesus' death; the crucifixion has dashed their hopes that Jesus might be the Messiah (vv.18-21). The disciples are however puzzled by the reports that some women found the tomb of Jesus empty! This leads to a rebuke by Jesus as he confronts their ignorance of the Scriptures (v.25); how could they have forgotten all the prophecies that pointed to both a death and resurrection? This leads to a Bible study (vv.26-27) and the recognition of Jesus (vv.28-35).

Excited and overwhelmed the disciples rush back to Jerusalem and report the sighting to the dejected disciples in Jerusalem. Instead of welcoming the good news the two were met with fear and unbelief.

Over thirty years ago Time Magazine featured its first all print cover. Over a black field in bold red letters "IS GOD DEAD" was written. The same magazine a few years latter ran another cover with the words; "IS GOD BACK?" Every generation has harsh critics; skeptics; people who deny the Bible; people who dismiss the resurrection of Jesus.

About 1930 the famous Bolshevik and atheist Bukarin journeyed from Moscow to Kiev. His mission—to address a huge gathering of people on the subject of atheism. For a solid hour he hammered the crowd with his heavy artillery of objections against Christianity and Christ. He hurled insult and ridicule. At last he was finished and looked out on the crowd; quite convinced that he had destroyed their faith. "Are there any questions?" Bukarin demanded. A solitary man arose and asked permission to speak. He mounted the platform and moved close to the Communist. The audience was breathlessly silent as the man looked first left and the right over the assembly. At last he shouted the Orthodox greeting: "CHRIST IS RISEN!" The vast assembly erupted like one vast human volcano! "HE IS RISIN INDEED!"

All these questions have the same answer: "What gives a widow courage as she stands before a fresh grave? What is the ultimo hope of the cripple, the amputee, the burn victim? How can the parents of a brain damaged or physically handicapped child keep from living their lives in total despair? Why would anyone who is blind or paralyzed be encouraged when they think about life beyond the grave? What provides hope for the parents and loved ones who watch their dead lowered into the ground, or take the tender remains and place them in a mausoleum? Where do the thoughts of a young couple go when they finally recover from the anguish and grief of losing their baby? What of the tragic news of the mother or father who hear their son was murdered, or parents have died in a plane crash or a child has overdosed on drugs? What singular truth becomes their whole focus? What is the final answer to pain, mourning, senility, insanity,

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terminal disease, sudden calamity or fatal accident? Have you guessed? It is the hope of the resurrection!

Much of my young life was spent in the Mojave desert. Not far was a place called Death Valley. It is about 200 miles northeast of Los Angeles. It is a baked out gorge that drops some 276 ft. below sea level. It is the hottest place in North America; reaching temperatures of 134 degrees. Streams flow into Death Valley and disappear! The barren wasteland gets barely 2.5 inches of rainfall per year. But something happened when I was young. For 19 days it rained on the bone dry surfaces of the desert. Suddenly seeds that had lain dormant for years burst into life! The Valley of Death became the wondrous valley of life! That is the story of Jesus' resurrection! A desert becomes a garden. Life outwits death. Love outlasts hatred. Hope outlasts despair. The haunting outline of a cruel cross disappears in the warm glow of Sunday morning!

How is it with your soul? Does it feel like a hot desert this morning? Has it been a while since hope has rained in your life? Jesus knows the silent circumstances of your life!

On Easter Sunday Jesus did not go to Church with family and friends. He went for a long walk with two unsuspecting disciples. Jesus had a Bible Study with them. Perhaps the most amazing Bible Study ever! Jesus was on a special hunt—for hearts! Sad, confused, broken hearts! And what is stranger still Jesus went incognito; in disguise! The friends of Jesus were upset because of his recent death. They thought suffering and death disqualified Jesus as a candidate for Savior and Messiah! Jesus did not want to be recognized.

Jesus wanted to prove from the Scriptures that He was alive! So he shows up unrecognized! He shows up on a desert road just west of town. He shows up for the most amazing reason: to provide hope for two souls whose hopes and dreams were broken, shattered! He shows up and confirms the most amazing promises; the Bible, the Word of God was right all along; and that God's promises can be trusted. Earlier the women came to the tomb with hearts broken and perplexed (v.4). Mary and the others came to anoint a body that was not there (v.10)! For those who are perplexed Jesus opens the tomb! Now for two discouraged disciples Jesus will open their eyes! For the troubled hearts of the apostles Jesus would open their minds! But for all—the women—the disciples—the Apostles, he would open their lips to proclaim with joy that Jesus was indeed risen!

### **Jesus: The Savior In Disguise (vv.13-16)**

This is the second appearance of Jesus in Luke's gospel; but the third appearance in the New Testament. Jesus has already shown himself alive to Mary Magdalene. The second appearance takes place in Mark 16:2-8 and Luke's version 24:1-11. But now Jesus is incognito; in disguise to the unsuspecting disciples. Jesus is in disguise for very good reason. The Bible says (Rom. 10:17); "That faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

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“to a village named Emmaus”; a town some 7 or 8 miles (60 stadia) west of Jerusalem. Perhaps the two disciples lived there since they ask Jesus to “abide with us” (v.29). They may have had relatives there! We don’t know. One thing we do know—Emmaus is the wrong direction! The greatest event in human history had just taken place in Jerusalem! Fellowship is in Jerusalem. Before the day is up, the disciples will return to Jerusalem!

*Luke 24:14 (NKJV); And they talked together of all these things which had happened.*

As they talked and discussed these things with each other—Jesus showed up! Do you ever consider the fact that Jesus shows up—when we gather in His name? You may have come to Church at the urging of a friend or relative but you never really anticipated that Jesus might show up! (v.15) “*while they conversed and reasoned*”; the word ‘reasoned’ can mean debate (no body, empty tomb, angelic visit, eye-witness testimony).

*Luke 24:15-16 (NIV) “As they talked and discussed these things with each other; Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.*

This was an act of divine intervention. Jesus can withhold His identity when it suits His purpose. It would not have been unusual for another Jewish traveller to have joined these two since so many people had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover.

### Jesus: The Hope In Shattered Dreams (vv.17-24)

(v.17) Wuest translates this verse; “What are these words words which you are tossing to and fro to one another in animated, heated conversation as you are walking? And they came to a standstill, with gloomy countenances (gloomy faces). In the modern vernacular; Jesus asks, “Dudes—why are you so bummed out?”

(v.18) Cleopas answers him; “Did you just fall off the the potato truck? Where are you from? How could you not know what’s going on? This is like asking someone from Littleton; “What happened at Columbine?” Or asking someone in New York; “What happened on September 11th? How could you not know? The events in Jerusalem were public knowledge. Hundreds of thousands of people were in Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus may have been a country preacher from a small town in the Galilee but the word was out. His execution was public! Soon the whole country would know what happened and the whole Roman world. **The same is true today. People cram into churches from all across the world.** They know something happened 2,000 years ago. But did Jesus really rise from the dead?

If Jesus did not rise from the dead; why go to church? Was the resurrection of Jesus a hoax, a fantasy, a product of wishful thinking or a vivid imagination? Was the resurrection a physical and historical event; or was it like some claim—a spiritual event—or a metaphor—or some other thing. Did Jesus rise in the same body in which he died or a different body? Do the answers really matter? Of course it matters!

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*Luke 24:19 (NKJV) “And He said to them, “What things?” So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”*

The answer of Jesus borders on the comical! “What things?” These disciples placed their hopes and dreams on Jesus. But now their hopes were shattered and their dreams dissolved. What do you do when you staked your whole life on a person and that person walks out on you? What do you do when life’s expectations don’t turn out like you planned? People are afraid to dream or desire because they can’t bear disappointment if they fail! These disciples were in part expecting a political messiah to liberate them from the oppression of Rome and the bondage of foreign occupation. They were not ready to come to grips with the fact that Jesus would suffer and die to liberate from sin; the most heinous bondage of all!

(vv.20-24) In verses 19-24 we see Cleopas communicate the facts as he understands them. In verse 19 he calls Jesus a prophet (as do Muslims and even some Jews). Cleopas is either unwilling or unable to call Jesus the Messiah. Many people today know the circumstances surrounding the death of Jesus, they can cite Scriptures and can communicate the fact that Jesus rose from the dead! But they don’t really believe it in their hearts. Someone has likened belief in the resurrection to four stages; (1) fairy tale, myth, unbelievable (see v.22). (2) Skeptical but willing to check out the facts (v.23). Like Peter they go to the empty tomb, are puzzled but remain unconvinced. (3) They have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ (v.31) which results in true belief. (4) As they commit themselves to Jesus; they understand the reality of the gospel and the presence of Jesus Christ.

The Life Application Bible has this little note (p.1541); “We are likely to miss Jesus and withdraw from the strength found in other believers when we become preoccupied with our dashed hopes and frustrated plans”. Are you still wondering whether Jesus can show up on Easter and change your life?

These men were unbelieving. These men left Jerusalem on Sunday morning. These men walked away from an empty tomb. These men heard the testimony of the women. These men had the testimony of angels. But they did not believe (v.22). “Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us”(v.23). Warren Wiersbe writes; “Their real problem was not in their heads but in their hearts. They could have discussed the subject for days and never arrived at a satisfactory answer. What they needed was a fresh understanding of the Word of God, and Jesus gave the understanding to them. He opened the Scriptures and then opened their eyes, and they realized that Jesus was not only alive but right there with them.”

*Luke 24:25-26 (NKJV) Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow to heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”*

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Like so many people today, they did not accept or understand all the Scripture. Like the Jews of old, people still long for and economic or political or psychological savior. They want a feel good Jesus who will make moral statements but not make personal demands. As they read the O.T. they saw the glory of a future Kingdom (which will come—rest assured); but they could not stand or accept a suffering servant. They failed to realize that you must wear a crown of thorns before you can wear the laurel wreath of glory or the crown of gold. You must submit in obedience before you can share the joy. Sometimes our flesh must taste stripes before we can experience healing. It is still true. The seed must first die before it can experience life.

So many false teachers and deceived Christians embrace a gospel of greed because they are greedy. Soren Kierkegaard warned that “the day when Christianity and the world become friends, Christianity is done away with!” Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote prophetically to a friend from his Berlin cell: “We are proceeding toward a time of no religion at all”. The world wants to erase, forget, deny, or dilute the Word of God. People pick and choose the Scriptures like entrees at an all you can eat Hebrew buffet. But Jesus is in every page in the Bible. The Bible is a book about Jesus.

### **Jesus: The Promise In All The Scripture (vv.27-35)**

*Luke 24:27 (NKJV) “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scripture the things concerning Himself.*

Jesus begins in Genesis (Moses); and continues through the writings of the Prophets. Jesus also gives us an important principle; we might call this the Jesus principle for understanding the Bible. The key to understanding the Scripture is to remember that Jesus Himself is the subject of the text. Jesus makes the Bible make sense—because the Bible is a book about Jesus. Jesus is the theme of the Bible Can you imagine being there? Did they forget Isaiah 52-53? Or Psalm 16, or 22 or Deuteronomy 18:15? The repeated testimony of the Scriptures was that God’s Messiah must suffer and die. This was God’s plan and promise. Can you start anywhere in the Bible and preach Jesus? The Bible is a gigantic post card of love, stamped in heaven and mailed to the earth. Can you find Jesus in;

Genesis:	He is the Beginning, the Chosen, the Prepared, the Powerful Lord.
Exodus:	He is the Passover, the Redeemer of His people and the Merciful Lord.
Leviticus:	He is the Object of Our Worship; He is set apart, Holy; Jesus is the sanctifier of His people.
Numbers:	He is the Shepherd of His wandering people; directing them sustaining them, testing them and ordering them to go into the promised land.
Deuteronomy	Jesus is the Great One who makes covenants with His people; makes ready the nation, instructs the nation; Jesus is the loving Lord and Great Reward who cries; “Obey!”
Joshua	Jesus is the Promised Land that we faithfully occupy

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Judges	Jesus is the one who drives out sin, provides deliverance from oppressors, repentance for the sorrowful; and deliverance from idolatry.
Ruth	Jesus is our kinsman redeemer
1 Samuel	Jesus is our Prophet, Priest and Judge
2 Samuel	Jesus is David's Son and the True Man After God's Own Heart
1 Kings	Jesus is The True Wisdom of God Who is Greater than Solomon.
2 Kings	Jesus is God's Faithful Covenant to His People, he is Elisha's promise of grace; life and hope.
1 Chronicles	Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; and the one who sits on David's throne.
2 Chronicles	Jesus is the One who is greater than the Temple.
Ezra	Jesus is the promise of the future, the forgiver and restorer of His people.
Nehemiah	Jesus is the promise of restoration and protection, leadership and identification.
Esther	Jesus puts Himself in the place of Death, to win the approval of the King and preserve His people. Jesus is Our Advocate.
Job	Jesus is our Daysman, our Mediator and the One who Identifies with us in our sufferings; and yet remains our only hope for redemption.
Psalms	Jesus is Our Song, Our Worship, and like the Gospels He is our King, Our Servant, the Son of Man and the Son of God.
Proverbs	Jesus is Wisdom personified and the Incarnation of Perfection. Jesus is the Wisdom and Knowledge of God.
Ecclesiastes	Jesus is Eternity in Our Hearts, He is the ultimate satisfaction, joy and abundant life.
Song of Solomon	He is our faithful Husband and we are the Bride of Christ.
Isaiah	Jesus is our Salvation
Jeremiah	Jesus is the Righteous Branch, who shall reign; The Lord our Righteousness
Lamentations	Jesus is the Prophet who weeps and says; 'O Jerusalem, the one who kills prophets and stones those who are sent to her'; the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.
Ezekiel	He is Messiah the King, the tender twig, and the stately cedar and the lofty mountain.
Daniel	He is the Great Sone that crushes the kingdoms of the world and the Ancient of Days. He is the Messiah who is cut off.
Hosea	Jesus is undying and loyal love.
Joel	He is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit and the One who judges the nations in the Valley of Decision.
Amos	Jesus is the One who has all authority to judge and restore His people.
Obadiah	He is the judge of the nations, the Savior of Israel, the Possessor of the Kingdom.
Jonah	He is the Son of Man in the Belly of the earth; the one Greater than Jonah; the one who died and came back to life.
Micah	He is the promise of Bethlehem and the one who's going forth has been from Everlasting to Everlasting.
Nahum	He is the Judge of the Nations at His Second Coming.

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Habakkuk	He is the justifier of the faithful and the One who fills the world with the knowledge of the glory of God.
Zephaniah	He is the Great Day of The Lord;
Haggia	He is the One who restores the Temple and blesses His people and is Zerubabel's signet ring.
Zechariah	He is God and Man; the Righteous Branch, the Stone with Seven Eyes and the King who is also Priest. He is the Good Shepherd, the One sold for 30 pieces of silver, the pierced One, the Smitten Shepherd who was forsaken, and the Coming Judge and Righteous King.
Malachi	He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and the one who turns the hearts of the fathers back to the children. He is the one who sends the Messenger John the Baptist and then Elijah.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus does not simply teach doctrine or prophecy; he taught them 'the things concerning Himself' (Luke 24:27). These men talked and listened and laughed with the stranger. And when Jesus made out like he would go on alone, they asked Jesus to come home with them. "They had been won by the Word of God, and they did not even know whom the stranger was! All they knew was their hearts were 'burning' and they wanted to the blessing to last" (Wierbse).

The more we receive the Word of God the more we will want to fellowship with the God of the Word. Now they knew for themselves that Jesus was alive. They were aware of an empty tomb; the angel's announcement and the testimony of the women. But now they saw for themselves. And even though he vanished he didn't leave. He was still with them.

The best of evidence that we have met the living God is that we must tell others and that is exactly what they did (vv.33-35).

What a difference when Jesus is alive. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone of us told someone that we took a little walk with Jesus? Here is a letter written to an advice column alone with the response:

Dear Eutyclus:

One preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?

Sincerely,

Bewildered

Dear Bewildered:

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Beat your preacher with a cat-o-nine tails with 39 heavy strokes; nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb; wait 36 hours and see what happens.

Sincerely,

Eutychus