

## Jesus in All Seasons

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The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! What a time to consider the hope of the gospel—that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us! And yet, this hope registers differently this year doesn't it? Perhaps it feels *distant*, a mild sadness or fear up close. Or perhaps you're *skeptical*—what difference does the resurrection make? Or maybe you're *excited*, thrilled, ready to rejoice in Christ's triumph over sin, death, and hell. Wherever you are this morning, Christ is ready to meet you. The complex, emotional demands of the entire world are easily met by Jesus: Christ and the saddened, the skeptical, and the super-excited.

### Christ and the Saddened

Our passage begins with a couple, Cleopas and possibly his wife, excitedly sharing with a crowded room of Jesus' followers. Just three days prior, their beloved friend, teacher, and would be messiah was crucified like a common criminal. Cleopas and his companion leave Jerusalem dejected making their way to Emmaus, a town about seven miles away, when an unrecognizable Jesus catches up to them and asks What they're talking about? The text says they **stopping in their tracks looking sad** (17). Why do we get sad? Sadness is a sign of *absence*: the absence of friends, family, love, joyful productivity, and worst, the absence of life. In our sadness, we ask questions like, When will it end? Will I ever get it back? Is there hope? The people Cleopas was talking to were also sad. They'd lost someone they loved, respected, hoped in, more than anyone else ever in their lives. They, along with the rest of the Jews, had been looking for a way out of the miserable, recycled chapters of their history: sin-exile-restoration. It all began with their parents, Adam and Eve who rejected God and were exiled from the garden. When Israel reached Canaan, they too rejected God and were exiled to Babylon. And now they're back in the land but under the exile, oppressed by Rome. It feels like God has been absent. They just want the cycle to stop, so Cleopas says to Jesus **"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel** (Lk 24:21). Now what does **redeem** mean? To redeem is *to free by paying a debt*. If you've ever been in credit card debt, you know it how oppressive it can be. The tyranny of the monthly payment, the exorbitant amount that has to be paid off, the compounding interest that makes it inconceivable you'll ever be free. And the guilt on top of it all. But if someone came along and said, I want to pay your debt; you'd not just be thrilled, you'd be free, free of liability, the guilt. But to do that, the person has to take on your liability, absorb your debt, *pay* what you owe. Jesus pays our debts, clears our bill but not for a few thousand dollars. The wages of sin is *death*. So Jesus walks them through the Scriptures to show *it was necessary* for him to suffer, be broken, and die *so they can go free*. Jesus is exiled to death so they can enjoy life. The cycle is broken. As he explains this, their hearts begin to burn, their affections kindle. Sadness evaporates. Guilt lifts. But it isn't until Jesus sits down with them and **took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them and their eyes were opened, and they recognized him** (Lk 24:30–31). Why? Because up to this point he'd been their teacher, interpreting his offer to pay their debts. But now he sits down, breaks the bread, and *hands them the payment*—this is my body, broken for you—and their eyes are opened! The rabbi become the Redeemer; the lion, the sacrificial lamb. *The breaking of the bread put in neon what they hoped to be true*. Christ had come to break the cycle of sin and

exile and restore the presence of God. In fact, Jesus was reversing the bitter meal of Eden, where Adam and Eve ate and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked and ashamed (Ge 3:7). But in this meal, Jesus opens their eyes to know they are forgiven, covered, no more shame. Verse 35: *It was in the breaking of the bread that he was known to them*. Have you been caught in a destructive cycle? Turn to Christ. Have you been living in exile from God? Receive Christ's exile in your place. Have your debts been paid? Then may your hearts burn for Christ!

### **Jesus and the Skeptical**

Despite the fact it was evening, Cleopas and his companion return to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the disciples Jesus has risen. Then Jesus suddenly appears in the room. They are startled, frightened, terrified is the word. The eleven disciples, whom Jesus taught for three years, are quarantined in a room afraid to go outside. What does Jesus do? Get out here you wimps! No, he says, *Peace to you*. He could have said: you of little faith; back-stabbing traitors; heartless skeptics, but he doesn't. He says, *Peace to you*. What a merciful Redeemer. Then he asks, *Why do doubts rise in your hearts?* Twice we're told they think he's a spirit. Like the Greeks and the Romans, the Jews didn't believe in physical resurrection. *Some* Jews believed everyone would be raised at the end of time to face judgement but certainly not a single man raised in the middle of history. So Jesus offers *proof* he's not a ghost. He invites our doubts, engages our questions. A multi-sensory inspection commences: *See* my hands and feet. They observe with their eyes. Now why the hands and feet? Well, if he's the real deal he'll have identifiable scars from the crucifixion. Check out. Then he says *Touch* me and see. They paw his frame, yep, flesh and bone. If not a spirit, then maybe he's an angel? In most Jewish traditions, angels didn't eat earthly food. So Jesus *shows* them something. He takes a piece of broiled fish and eats it *in plain sight*. Sight, touch, show—a full inspection of the risen Christ! Proof, not only that Jesus had risen but that he will resurrect all things. His body a preview of things to come, Paul says. So, Christianity is no pie in the sky kind of faith, mere spirit and ideals; it's flesh and bone reality. The renewal of all things. Then he says, *These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*. And verse 46, *thus it is written*. Now why did he go on and start talking about the Scriptures? Wasn't his resurrection enough? Actually, no, it isn't enough to have proofs; redemption requires *trust* in his words. Seeing isn't believing. We're told that many doubted after seeing Christ. Believing is seeing. We have to trust his words to be redeemed. See, at some point you have to get to the bottom of your doubts and ask, *Who will I trust?* Yourself or Jesus? Adam Kirsch is a critic from Columbia University who wrestles with what it means to be *modern*. He asks us to imagine transporting someone from the year 1916 to the present. We would expect them to be impressed with our achievements: space flight, global communications, streaming media. But after a few days, he says, they'd figure it out and recognize something eerily familiar—the anxiety and pride of modern man. See people from the traveler's time were just as proud of their achievements—railroad, machine guns, steamships—and just as anxious. Kirsch concludes that demolishing the world through doubt and rebuilding it through logic is destined to fail. Instead, he says we have accept that our knowledge of the world is not absolute, and that despite all our technological innovation, we are not as trustworthy as we would like ourselves to be. Jesus, however, is a non-anxious presence who offers peace in

the face of fear, proof for our doubts, and payment for our debts. But more than all of that, Jesus offers hope of resurrected life in a resurrected world. A place where every tear is wiped away, every body and mind made whole, and every single place teeming with unimpeachable life. Jesus is the preview of things to come. If you don't trust him, you should *want* to trust him. Because there's no one more reliable, patient, humble, forgiving, and glorious than Jesus Christ.

### **Jesus and the Super Excited**

We've thought about Jesus and the saddened, Jesus and the skeptical, now Jesus and the super-excited. What happens next? There is *worship* and witness. As the redeeming, risen Christ ascends into heaven, his followers *worship* him, return to Jerusalem with great *joy*, and there continually *bless* God in the temple (52-3). There is an eruption of joy. Salvation isn't a stodgy spiritual transaction or a placid escape into nothingness. No, this is full-bodied joy. Friends, today is a day of rejoicing. Jesus has hatched a rebellion of light in the darkness. Your application? Sing your hearts out in your homes to the risen, reigning, and returning Christ!

Worship *and* witness: [Proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins in Jesus name to all the nations](#) (47). Don't keep this to yourself. You've been sent into the world, to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins. Not in your name, your skill, your eloquence, but in Jesus' name. Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us! Now that's something worth sharing! Let's worship and witness.