

# Re-imagining Life

## Session 8: *The Triumph of Whole-Life!*



Death is the ultimate weapon of every tyrant. It is the action that will bring fear and force people to act in ways that are in line with the despot's will. But if death cannot hold you, is unable to silence you, is impotent – what then?

The interesting fact in the story of the resurrection of Jesus is that no-one expected it. The Romans knew they had killed him – they were experts at crucifixion. They were clearly a little concerned lest someone stole his body. But there was no doubt he was dead. The religious rulers must have felt that they could rest a little easier now. One such Jew, more sympathetic to Jesus' cause, gave his own grave so that Jesus would be buried in a respectable location, rather than with the town's criminals and paupers. You don't give graves away to people who do not expect to need them!

So when Jesus was raised from the dead, everyone was taken by surprise. The light would dawn on them slowly that God had triumphed. It would be a time before they could understand that the meaning of Jesus' life was not empty; that evil and suffering had not had the last word; that relationships were ongoing after death; that in a remarkable way physical bodies were glorified after death; that there was a new beginning with a new King enthroned on high.

For our session, we are going to concentrate on the fact that Jesus appears to them with a real body – he is not some disembodied angelic figure. In doing so, he emphasizes that this creation is God's and God will not abandon it. There is no sacred/secular divide: the greatest miracle is done in the midst of superpowers and is demonstrated with bread and fish after a long walk together. It is after this that his disciples are told to go and proclaim the good news – wherever they go. Societies can change. The UK can be reached! We can go and tell a new story about the King who is enthroned over every power, created or uncreated. There is hope. Tyrants never have the last word.

## Luke 24

<sup>13</sup>Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup>They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup>As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup>but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup>He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup>One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

<sup>19</sup>"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup>The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup>but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup>In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup>but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

<sup>25</sup>He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup>As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

<sup>33</sup>They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup>and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." <sup>35</sup>Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate it in their presence.

## Notice

### As you read, notice these features:

*Notice that they 'were kept from recognizing Jesus'. Why do you think this was? Was it so that they would have a new revelation of who he was? Was it to demonstrate that you can know Jesus even if you cannot see him?*

*Their hopes were clearly that Jesus would set them free from his enemies and inaugurate the Kingdom of God (see Luke 1:68, 2:38, 21:28). However, the death of Jesus had led them to believe that all these hopes had been in vain.*

*Notice that they have to urge him to stay with them – why?*

*The reference to breaking bread clearly points back to the Last Supper. It is at this point that they understand who has been with them.*

## Jesus Appears to the Disciples

<sup>36</sup>While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

<sup>37</sup>They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

<sup>40</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup>And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate it in their presence.

<sup>44</sup>He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

<sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

*The physical marks of crucifixion were still present. He is not a vision, or a mere spirit being. He is glorified humanity.*

*What sorts of things would he have told them that had been written in the Old Testament?*

## Reflect

The disciples clearly felt disappointed in all that had happened – that somehow Jesus had let them down. He allowed them to express this, before he led them into a bigger picture of all that was true.

What have been the occasions for you feeling disappointed with what God has, or has not, done? Have you come to a point at a later date that has helped you understand God in a new way, even through the disappointment?

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important for you as a Christian? What difference does it make to your everyday life? I know this sounds too obvious, but think through how your life is changed because of this fact.

It was as they took bread and broke it that they knew that Jesus was with them. When you take communion, what do you think about? How does it relate to your everyday life?

It was important that Jesus was seen not to be a vision, or a ghost, but in a glorified physical body. Is that important to you? Why?

How and where are we able to explain the good news of the faith? Tell each other stories of times when you have been able to do this effectively. What happened?



## Word for the Week

### **Learning from Jesus – stumbling over treasure**

**Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Matthew 8:19,20**

We never hear of Jesus going to his own house; he stays with friends; he borrows a room in someone's house for his last meal; he tells a would-be disciple that he doesn't have a bed of his own. There are other things he lacked. He never married. He never reached middle age. He seems not to have had any money, but a common purse, provided with funds by followers, for his and his disciples' needs. He had little privacy unless he went out at night into the hills. He lived a full, perfect, wholly holy life without most of the things we take for granted.

'Desperate' for marriage and children; 'wasted' in the wrong job; 'bitter' about physical handicap: we all live with some level of longing, that cannot or might not be fulfilled, but which can destroy our happiness and our peace with God. Jesus showed us that a full and purposeful life, with rich friendships and a close relationship with God is not dependent on material and personal circumstances.

The way we respond to handicaps and limitations is much more important for a full life, than the 'handicaps' themselves. If we seek and long for the material things we don't and can't have, then we are bound for disappointment and regret, and likely to lose our God-given opportunities for purpose and enrichment.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

There is another side, however, to the longing for treasures we cannot have. Many of us do have this world's material treasures in abundance and may find much of our happiness and self-fulfilment in their acquisition and up-keep. Health, wealth and good fortune can be just as powerful barriers to true heart happiness and fulfilment than the lack of them. Storing up treasures on earth or regretting that we haven't any to store, either way we are losing out.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance through all my days;  
Thou, and thou only, the first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art!