***Fish and Repentance***

**Luke 24:36-49 April 25, 2020**

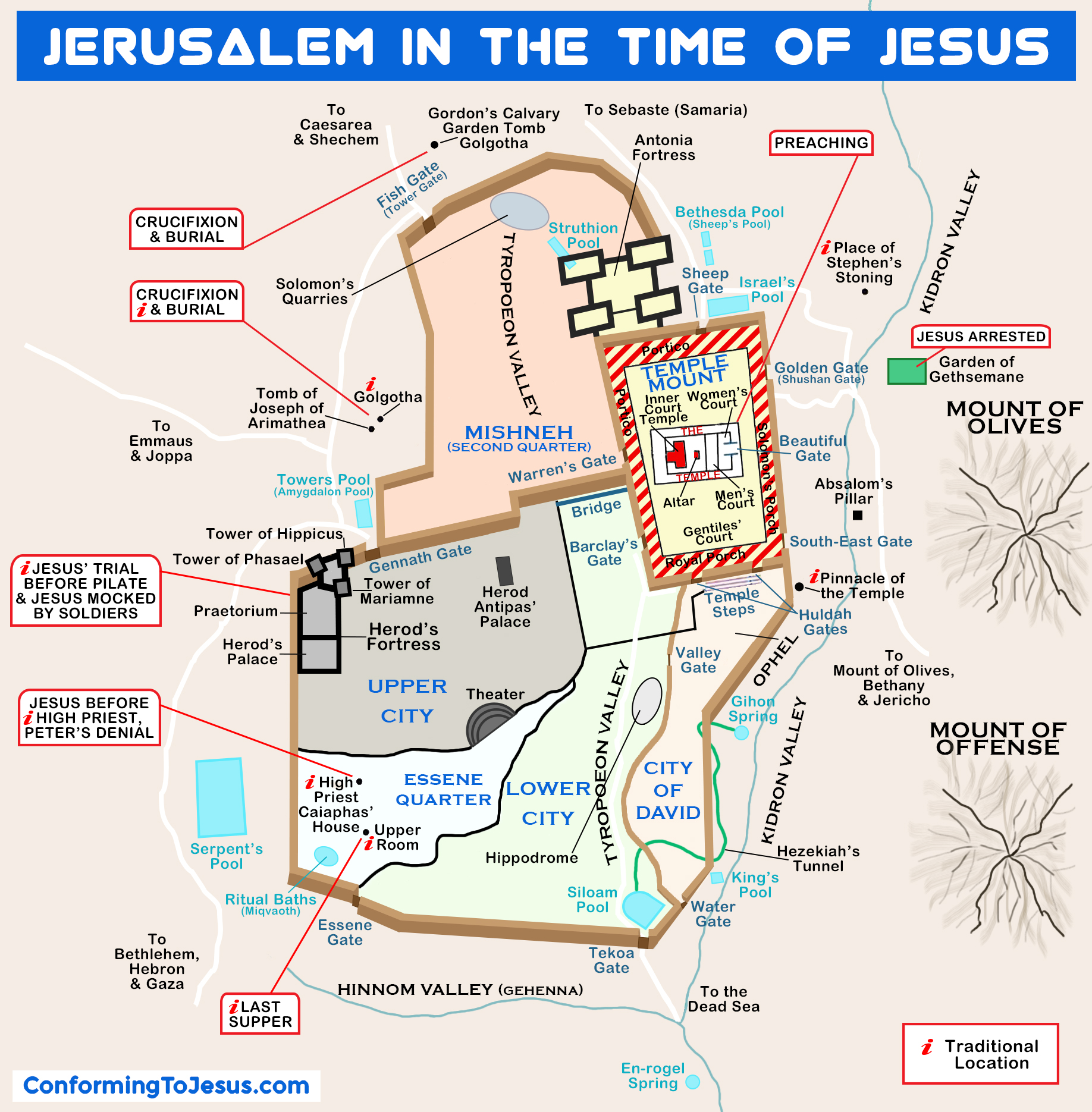
***Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures.  
He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer   
and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins   
will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.   
You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised;  
but stay in Jerusalem until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*Luke 24:30-31**

**The continuing story of resurrection**

*While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them,   
“Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a ghost . . . .*Luke 24:36

1) Am I at the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ?

 2) Resurrection faith is often \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



**Proof by fish**

*He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look . . . .”  
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish . . . .* Luke 24:38-43

1) When something is too good to be true, ask \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) A sacrament of fish because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) Wounds and appetite teach that resurrection is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**He opened their minds**

*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.”   
Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*Luke 24:44-45 (see Romans 12:1-2)

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ am the “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”

2) God is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , but I have to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Beginning in Jerusalem (or, the Great Commission, Luke style)**

*He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,  
and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.   
You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what the Father has promised;   
but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*Luke 24:46-49

1. The “bud” of the gospel flower: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) No sending (= “apostolic”) ministry without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) Beginning in Jerusalem because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resources on Luke 24:36-49**

Spurgeon’s sermon on Luke 24:36-49 at *https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/joy-hindering-faith#flipbook/* and *https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/folly-of-unbelief#flipbook/* and most importantly, “Beginning in Jerusalem” at *https://archive.spurgeon.org/sermons/1729.php*

Allistair Begg’s sermons on Luke 24 at *https://www.truthforlife.org/bible/Luke%2024:13-35/*

Bunyan’s “The Jerusalem Sinner Saved” at *https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3270/3270-h/3270-h.htm*

Deffinbaugh’s sermon on the resurrection at *https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53*

Horatio Bonar’s thoughts on resurrection as a part of his commentary on Revelation at *https://awakeninggracedotorg.wordpress.com/2011/12/19/horatius-bonar-three-reasons-to-fear-not-from-the-risen-jesus/*

I like J. C. Ryle’s short commentary on the Luke 24 at *https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm*

*BAR*’s article on the Upper Room at *https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/post-biblical-period/hunting-for-the-upper-room-in-jerusalem/*

# Israel, Jerusalem, aerial view of Mount Zion, the Church of the Dormition and the Room of the Last SupperIsrael, Jerusalem, Dormition Abbey, Mount Zion and St Peter in ...

# From Invisibility to Invincibility (Luke 24:36-53) Bob Deffinbaugh at *https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53*

*36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 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.” 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

*44 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.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things . 49 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.”*

*50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.*

### Introduction

The distressing thing about our text is that the disciples, at the beginning of our passage, more closely characterize the church today than the disciples, at the end. The disciples’ initial response to the death of Christ was total devastation. Their response to the reports and evidence pointing to His resurrection was disbelief—hard core, persistent unbelief (cf. [Mark 16:14-15](javascript:%7b%7d)). The disciples are almost invisible in the text. They are hiding behind closed doors, or silently grieving in the safety of their own quarters (cf. [Luke 24:12](javascript:%7b%7d)). At the end of our text, the disciples’ fear has turned to boldness; their confusion to conviction; their troubled spirits to joy; their wallowing in self-pity and disappointment to worship.

It was Frank Tillipaugh, in his excellent book, The Church Unleashed, who referred to the “fortress mentality” of the church. I fear that he is right, that the church is more concerned about nurturing itself than it is with reaching a lost world with the gospel. We are more concerned with our own self-image than we are with the salvation of the lost. We seem to be more caught up in safety and security than in faith and obedience. We persist in constructing programs which protect us from the pagan world in which we live, rather than to penetrate it with the good news of the gospel. In the name of edification, the home and the family, we have preoccupied ourselves with ourselves. We are, I suspect, very much like the disciples, at the time of their unbelief.

If this is so, it is not a hopeless or incurable malady. The troubled and doubting disciples were transformed in our text, to men and women of joy, of boldness, and of worship. Soon, they will be characterized by their witness as well. Whatever it was that hindered these disciples is curable. And whatever the cure, it is just as available and as applicable today as it was 2,000 years ago. Let us consider our text, first to learn what transformed these almost invisible (the eleven disciples hardly appear in the gospels after the death of Christ) disciples to an invincible force that turned the world of that day upside-down. Let us then learn the same lesson for ourselves.

### The Structure of the Passage

The structure of the text is quite simple. Verses 36-43 depict the unbelief of the disciples and emphasize the “physical evidence” for the physical, literal, resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verses 44-49 deal with the “biblical evidence” for what has taken place, and for what is yet to happen. Verses 50-53 describe the ascension of our Lord, and the dramatic difference which all these things had on the disciples. Summarized, the structure of the passage is as follows:

(1) Verses 36-43 — Exhibit 1: The Physical Evidence

(2) Verses 44-49 — Exhibit 2: The Biblical Evidence

(3) Verses 50-53 — Exhibit 3: The Difference in the Disciples

### Background

Before we consider these three sections, their meaning, and their relevance, let us make a few observations about the passage in general.

**First, the time which is spanned in these verses is 40 days.** We know this from Luke’s words in Acts chapter 1, where he wrote,

To these [apostles] He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God ([Acts 1:3](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We might gain the impression that these three paragraphs describe incidents all occurring on the same day, if it were not for these words in [Acts 1](javascript:%7b%7d), along with the parallel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke’s purpose is not to tell us all that happened in those 40 days, nor even to indicate a change in location, as much as to sum up the way in which Jesus convinced His disciples that He was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures. We may, therefore, suspect that a change in time and place might be found, for example, in verses 44 and 50. We do know at least that the ascension of our Lord took place 40 days after His resurrection, and thus more than a month after His first appearance to the disciples, as described in verses 36-43.

**Second, Luke’s account of the last days of our Lord on the earth may be more thorough than the account given by Matthew, but his account in the first chapter of Acts is even more detailed.** Luke’s purpose, like that of the other gospel writers, was not to tell us everything, but to tell us a few important things, and thus they are selective in what they choose to relate. They have much more to tell us than what they have written (cf. [John 20:30-31](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**Third, Luke’s emphasis in his account of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ is on what took place in Jerusalem, not so much on what happened in Galilee** (as, for example, Matthew recorded (28:16-17). There are many appearances, some of which are described in one or more gospel, and others of which may be described by another. There were probably a number of appearances which were not even mentioned. We should not expect to be able to neatly harmonize all of the accounts, for there is simply too much that is not said. If all the facts were known, the details would perfectly harmonize.

**Fourth, while Jesus referred to the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, Luke did not include any references for us in his account.** Furthermore, Jesus’ teaching is not really recorded, but only the most general thrust of it. We will discover some of the central passages when we come to our study in the book of Acts,[153](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8314_2832651) but the passages are not listed here. I think that the Spirit of God is challenging us to read and study the Old Testament and to find them for ourselves. We should look for prophecies pertaining to Christ in the Old Testament, indeed, in every part of it. Luke’s report of Jesus’ words tells us what to look for, and where, but the searching is still our task.[154](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8315_2833110)

### Exhibit One: Physical Evidence of Jesus’ Resurrection (24:36-42)

*36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself*[*155*](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8319_2833408) *stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 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.” 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

The two disciples whom Jesus intercepted on the road to Emmaus could not wait to return to tell the good news to their brethren at Jerusalem. Immediately after they recognized Jesus and He disappeared, they rushed back to Jerusalem, and to the disciples. They were not even able to get their words out because Jesus had already appeared to Peter, who told them Jesus was indeed alive. Thus, the two disciples first heard of the certainty of Jesus’ resurrection from their peers. The best they could do was simply to add their own testimony to the same truth. Jesus was really risen from the dead, and they believed it.

Or so it seemed, but when Jesus actually appeared, it was clear that their “belief” in His resurrection was insufficient. Jesus’ first words to this group were, “Peace be with you” (verse 36). That was not their response, however. They were “startled” and “troubled,” Luke tells us (verse 37). Why? Why were they not overjoyed? Why were they frightened and upset? The word “startled” suggests that the disciples were “caught off guard,” as though they never expected to see Jesus. If He was really alive, as they professed, why would His appearance be such a shock? If Jesus had greeted with a pronouncement of “peace,” why were they troubled, the very opposite of peace?

The answer is that they thought Jesus to be only a ghost, a spirit, and they were frightened of ghosts.[156](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8323_2835616) The disciples believed in ghosts, and, at the moment, they believed Jesus was a ghost. This is, to some degree, understandable. John’s gospel informs us that the room in which the disciples were gathered had a “locked door” ([John 20:19](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus’ appearance was, therefore, not a normal one. How could Jesus have entered the room in a normal body? The ghost explanation made sense to them. It was their first (and seemingly unanimous) conclusion.

The fact was, it was easier for the disciples to believe in a “ghostly” Jesus, than in a Jesus who was literally and physically present. The issue really comes down to “belief” or “unbelief.” The disciples thought they really believed. They said that they believed ([Luke 24:34](javascript:%7b%7d)). But they did not really believe it. In Mark’s account, he tells us that Jesus Later appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen ([Mark 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Belief, we know, is not just a matter of our professions, but of our practice (cf. [James 1:19–2:26](javascript:%7b%7d)). In the book of Acts we are told of the vision which Peter received, convincing him that he was no longer to avoid contact with Gentiles ([Acts 10:9-16](javascript:%7b%7d)). This was to pave the way for Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, and to preach the gospel. Peter did so, and these Gentiles came to faith. But the Jewish leaders of the church in Jerusalem called Peter on the carpet for his actions. After he gave a very thorough explanation, they had to acknowledge,

“Well, then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” ([Acts 11:18](javascript:%7b%7d)b).

In spite of this profession, their practice lagged behind, for in the very next verse we are told,

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone ([Acts 11:19](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

If our belief and our behavior do not match, it is often our belief that is inadequate. So it was for the disciples. And so it is, I might add, for most of us as well.

It is noteworthy to observe that the “insufficient belief” of the disciples at the appearance of our Lord is very similar to the “insufficient belief” of many today, when it comes to the resurrection of our Lord. They would hastily admit that Jesus is, in some sense, alive today. He is alive in spirit, alive in our hearts, not unlike the way in which the memory of those who have died lives within us. But He is not viewed to be physically raised from the dead and present with His people today. Such unbelief is like that of the disciples. And this unbelief Jesus was determined to change to genuine faith.

The thrust of verses 36-43 is our Lord’s gracious provision of ample physical evidence for His physical resurrection. The first evidence was the Lord, standing before them. He was not, as they supposed, a ghost. He encouraged them to touch Him,[157](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8332_2838777) and to see that He had flesh and bones (verse 40). He also encouraged them to look at His hands and His feet (verse 40). The inference is clear that both His hands and His feet bore the nail prints which He had from the cross. In this sense, at least, His body was “like” the body He had before His death. The body of our Lord was not like the former body in that it was not corruptible, and it was somehow capable of appearing and disappearing, as was evident in His appearance in the room where they met, with the door locked. Finally, Jesus ate some of the fish which they were eating, the final proof that His body was, indeed, a real one—one which may not require food for life, but which did assimilate it. How else would Jesus be able to share a banquet with His disciples in heaven, and to drink the cup and eat the bread anew in the kingdom (cf. [Luke 22:15-18](javascript:%7b%7d))?

The evidence was compelling. The disciples were convinced. This is most apparent by the change in their disposition. There are three sets of descriptions given to us in verses 36-37. Pause for a moment to note them:

(1) Startled and Frightened (verse 37)

(2) Troubled and Doubting (verse 38)

(3) Joy and Amazement (verse 41)

The disciples’ first response to Jesus’ appearance was that they were “startled and frightened” (verse 37). Jesus pressed past these symptoms, to the deeper roots, which was that their spirits were troubled and doubting (verse 38). Once the evidence was grasped by the disciples, their “troubled spirits” turned to “joyfulness” (which I think includes the “peace” of which our Lord spoke in His greeting[158](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8338_2841184)), and their “doubt” turned to amazement. The former “doubt” was that of unbelief, the latter “amazement” was due to joy, equivalent to, “I can’t believe this is happening to me!,” or “It’s too good to be true!”

We should not leave these verses behind without suggesting that Lord’s use of the term “peace” is more than just the usual form of greeting, which it seems to be. The term “peace” should have been a pregnant one, first of all from its Old Testament roots. Very often (e.g. [Lev. 26:1-13](javascript:%7b%7d); [Num. 6:22-26](javascript:%7b%7d); [Judg. 6:11-24](javascript:%7b%7d); [Isa. 9:1-7; 48:17-18; 59:1-8; 60:17-20](javascript:%7b%7d); [Ezek. 37:24-28](javascript:%7b%7d); [Micah 5:5](javascript:%7b%7d); [Hag. 2:3-9](javascript:%7b%7d)) the peace of God is closely associated with His presence. Conversely, the absence of peace is associated with His absence or withdrawal. Second, Jesus’ words to His disciples, recorded by John in the upper room discourse ([John 14-17](javascript:%7b%7d)) contained the word “peace” several times. The “peace” of which our Lord spoke there had to do with the future, when His presence with His disciples was manifested through His Spirit, who was yet to come. The peace of God and the presence of God are virtually inseparable. It is not surprising, then, that Jesus would show His disciples that He was physically present, and also speak to them about peace.

### Exhibit Two: Exegetical Evidence (24:44-49)

*44 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.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 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.”*

With the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus, Jesus began with the exegetical (biblical) evidence concerning His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. He then existentially (experientially) was revealed to them, only to immediately disappear. Here, the order is reversed, but both the existential and the exegetical elements are present.

The first thing that catches my attention in these verses is that there is nothing “new” here, either concerning what has happened to the Lord Jesus, or concerning what was to take place in and through the disciples. All of it has been prophesied in the Scriptures, and also foretold by the Lord Jesus. There are three specific areas of focus here: (1) the rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) the proclamation of the gospel to all nations; and, (3) the promise of the Holy Spirit, coming on the disciples to endue them with power.

The first of these three will come as no surprise to us. The rejection, death, and resurrection of Messiah was one of the prominent (albeit perplexing, cf. [1 Peter 1:10-12](javascript:%7b%7d)) prophetic themes of the Old Testament. The rejection and suffering of the Lord Jesus was alluded to by Simeon ([Luke 2:34-35](javascript:%7b%7d)). It was hinted at by the treatment of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. It was anticipated by the rejection of Jesus on the occasion of His first (recorded) public presentation of Himself as Messiah in the synagogue at Nazareth ([Luke 4:14-30](javascript:%7b%7d)). As Jesus’ ministry and message became more widespread, the opposition of the Jewish religious leaders became more intense and organized. On several occasions or Lord told His disciples that this would be His divinely determined destiny (cf. [Luke 9:21-23; 9:44-45; 18:31-34](javascript:%7b%7d)). While the disciples did not grasp this truth, and even resisted what they knew of it, they needed only to be reminded that this is what He had told them.

The rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus was not only something which He had told them previously, on a number of occasions, it was also that concerning which the Old Testament prophets had foretold, beginning with the Law Moses, and including the Prophets and the Psalms. These three—the Law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets—are not just references to general witnesses to the suffering and Messiah; they are the three main categories or divisions into which the entire Old Testament was sub-divided. Thus, Jesus was reminding His disciples that the entire Old Testament, in all of its three major divisions, bore witness to His suffering and death. All of the Old Testament, beginning with the Law of Moses, looked ahead to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. And all of the Old Testament spoke of His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection, either by direct statement or by inference. Thus it was the Jesus could say, as recorded in John’s gospel, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad” ([John 8:56](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Twice now, in the last chapter of Luke’s gospel, Jesus had made reference to the prophecies of the Old Testament referring to His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. At least in His conversation with the two men on the road to Emmaus (24:27), Jesus specifically referred to a number of Old Testament texts and explained them in the light of their fulfillment in Him. But we are not given so much as one reference here. Why did Jesus spell out to His disciples the Old Testament prophecies which referred to Him, but Luke does not enumerate them for us? I suspect that there are at least two reasons. First, we will see what some of the key prophecies are when we get to the Book of Acts. In Acts chapter two, for example, Peter will refer to some Old Testament texts to prove that Jesus had to suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. Luke is simply waiting for a better time. Second, however, I think that God may have intended for us to search out these texts for ourselves. He chose not to give us a concordance or a topical reference set to this subject. He expects us to read our Old Testament with an eye for those prophecies pertaining to Messiah. God does not do all our homework for us.

Verse 45 is crucial, I believe, for it indicates to us that while there was an unbelief of which the disciples were guilty, and for which they were rebuked (e.g. [Mark 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d)), there was also a natural inability to understand the Scriptures, which had to be divinely removed. In verse 45, Luke informs us that Jesus removed that veil, enabling the disciples to understand, for the first time, the Old Testament Scriptures pertaining to Him as Messiah, especially as related to His rejection, suffering, and death. This is consistent with what Paul will later write in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

But we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for it they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,

“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ ([1 Corinthians 2:7-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

From this text we can see that all men, unaided by the Spirit of God, are incapable of understanding the things of God because God, His ways, and His means, are vastly beyond our ability to comprehend. In addition to this barrier, there is an additional “veil” which must be removed from the eyes of the Jews. Of this Paul also wrote in his second epistle to the Corinthians: *But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; BUT WHENEVER A MAN TURNS TO THE LORD, THE VEIL IS TAKEN AWAY. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit* ([2 Corinthians 2:14-18](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It was not until after His resurrection that the eyes of the disciples were opened to understand all that the prophets had spoken pertaining to the ministry of the Messiah, and especially of His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. That veil was now removed. From this point on the disciples will turn to the Old Testament prophecies to prove the Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that all that happened to Him was a prophetic necessity.

The second facet of Old Testament prophecy to which Jesus pointed the disciples was the proclamation of the gospel to all nations, and not just to Israel: 46 *He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things* ([Luke 24:46-48](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Notice the “and,” the only thing between the first facet and the second. There is no disjunction here, but conjunction. It was written that the “Christ must suffer and rise on the third day,” and it was also written that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.” Here was a truth just as difficult to grasp as the first. How the Jews resisted this aspect of Christ’s Messiahship, as He clearly indicated it must be at the very outset of His ministry ([Luke 4:24-27](javascript:%7b%7d)). And this was not the first time that the salvation of the Gentiles would be spoken of in Luke. At the birth of the Lord Jesus, the angel told the shepherds that the “good news of great joy” which he was bringing to them was “for all the people” (2:10). The universality of the gospel—the fact that the Messiah would die for the sins of all who would believe, Jew or Gentile—was one of the greatest irritations for the Jews, especially for those who did not see themselves as “sinners.”

The Abrahamic Covenant, which was made with Abraham, is usually viewed as focusing on the blessings which will come to Israel, but the blessings God promised Abraham were those which would extend to all nations: *“And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* ([Genesis 12:3](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

The later prophets will affirm this same promise of salvation and blessing for the Gentiles. We see, for example, these prophecies: 28 *“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls* ([Joel 2:28-32](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

3 *‘Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? 4 But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord. ‘Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the Lord Almighty. 5 ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’ 6 “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord Almighty. 8 ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty. 9 ‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the Lord Almighty”* ([Haggai 2:3-9](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations* ([Isaiah 42:1](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

In the light of the fact that the salvation which Messiah came to bring was for all nations, the Great Commission comes as no new revelation, but as an outflow, both of the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, and of the Old Testament prophecies which foretold of the salvation of men of every nation. Notice that Luke (both here and in [Acts 1:8](javascript:%7b%7d)) records the Great Commission, not so much as a command as a promise, a certainty.

In order for the gospel to be proclaimed to men of every nation, beginning at Jerusalem, the disciples must be endued with power, the promised power of the Holy Spirit, which would turn hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, which would convict and convert some of the very ones who, only a little more than a month before, had called out for the murder of Messiah. This promise of the Holy Spirit was, like the two previous areas of prophecy, something of which Jesus spoke to His disciples, and which the Old Testament prophets had foretold. Let us look briefly at some of these references to the Holy Spirit’s coming.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was a “clothing with power from on high,” as Jesus said (verse 49). It was also that which the Father had promised. This “promise of the Father” (cf. [Acts 1:4](javascript:%7b%7d)) must have its roots in the Old Testament prophets, and so it does. Once again, however, if Jesus told the disciples what the specific prophetic texts were, Luke did not record them. We know from Acts chapter 2 that Joel chapter 2 will be one of those texts. But let us look at several other texts which promise the coming of the Spirit in a greater way than Israel had experienced to that point in time: 12 *Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines 13 and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briers—yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. 14 The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks, 15 till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. 16 Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. 17 The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. 18 My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. 19 Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, 20 how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free* ([Isaiah 32:12-20](javascript:%7b%7d)).

*1 “But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. 2 This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. 4 They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. 5 One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel* ([Isaiah 44:1-5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

*20 “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the Lord. 21 “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,” says the Lord* ([Isaiah 59:20-21](javascript:%7b%7d)).

*The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” … Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord’”* ([Ezekiel 37:1-3](javascript:%7b%7d)a,11-14).

*I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord”* ([Ezekiel 39:29](javascript:%7b%7d)).

*10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. 11 On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, 13 the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, 14 and all the rest of the clans and their wives* ([Zechariah 12:10-14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The “promise of the Father” was reiterated by John the Baptist, who contrasted his baptism with that of the Messiah who would come after him (cf. [Luke 3:16](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus also spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit in [Luke 11:5-13](javascript:%7b%7d). When the disciples were drug off and put on trial for their faith, they were told not to prepare their defense in advance, but that in that hour the Holy Spirit would give them the words to speak ([Luke 12:12](javascript:%7b%7d); [Mark 13:11](javascript:%7b%7d); [Matthew 10;20](javascript:%7b%7d)). It the Gospel of John primary source of our Lord’s teaching on the Holy Spirit. Jesus offered the Holy Spirit to all who thirsted ([John 7:37-39](javascript:%7b%7d)), and He especially promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples in His absence ([John 14-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be taken up in our study of the Book of Acts, but suffice it to say that Jesus commanded His disciples not to go forth with their witness to the things which had happened apart from the power which He would provide through His Spirit. He who commanded the disciples to be His witnesses also commanded them only to witness in the power that He would provide. He who commands is He who enables.

### The Ascension and the Disciples’ Boldness in Worship (24:50-53)

*50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.*

Forty days have passed, as Luke will make clear in [Acts 1:3](javascript:%7b%7d). The disciples are now led to the outskirts of Jerusalem, a “Sabbath day’s journey” for that city, to the mount called Olivet ([Acts 1:12](javascript:%7b%7d)). As He lifted His hands in blessing, He was taken up from them. A slightly more detailed account will follow in Acts. Luke jumps ahead to those days which will follow (I think that these are after Pentecost). These disciples who were so distraught and disarmed by the death of Jesus are now described as transformed.

Notice the change that Luke describes here. These once despondent disciples are now characterized by praise. And these followers of Jesus who only days before were cowering behind locked doors, hidden from the Jewish religious leaders who crucified their Lord, are now persistently, publicly praising God—in the temple, the very headquarters of Judaism. The change is briefly described. The transformation will be depicted in much greater detail in the Book of Acts, the sequel volume, which perhaps is already under way.

### Conclusion

The last chapter of Luke serves as a kind of conclusion, as we would expect. But in reality it is hardly a conclusion. There is but one verse, the very last verse, which gives us any sense of conclusion, and that is incredibly brief. The reason should be obvious. The Gospel of Luke cannot provide us with an ending. It is a gospel, and as such, it can tell us of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, but it cannot tell us the whole story. This is precisely why Luke found it necessary to write another volume, a sequel to the gospel. In this book, Luke will continue the story of the work of Christ in the world through His church, empowered by His Spirit.

As I read the Gospel of Luke and then the Book of Acts, I can rather easily understand why the disciples felt and acted as they did in the Gospel of Luke. I can even somewhat grasp how their feelings and actions changed in the Book of Acts. But what troubles me is that the church today seems to act more like the disciples in Luke than they do the apostles in Acts. Is it possible that we need to undergo the same change of heart, mind, and action that the disciples did? Are we so much like they were then? I think so.

How, then, must we change, to be more like the apostles in Acts than to continue to be like the disciples in Luke? What must change? First of all, I think that we believe, far more than the disciples did, that Jesus had to be rejected, put to death, and rise again. I don’t think our problem is understanding what the Old Testament taught about Jesus. To take this a step further, I don’t think that we have a great problem understanding what the gospels teach, concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I think our problem is that in spite of all that we know about Jesus, we don’t really believe it. Our “profession” (our creed—what we say we believe) may be post-Pentecost, but our practice, our conduct is pre-Pentecost. We live more like the disciples lived in Luke than like they lived in Acts. The facts we know, but do we really believe them. The power we profess, but do we really practice it?

In short, I see the problem exposed here in Luke, but the solution is yet to be worked out. It is solved in Acts. While a believe in the resurrection of Christ is vital, there is yet more that is needed. What is it? Let us press on to Acts to see what it is. On to volume 2!

Not quite so fast. Before we press on, let me give you a hint. The disciples had come to believe that Jesus had not only died, but had risen again. The nature of the resurrection, as the disciples grasped it, was inadequate—they thought of it only as a “spiritual” resurrection. They did not really believe Jesus was present with them. That was the truth that was so hard to grasp. Jesus was not only alive. Jesus was with them, in their very midst. He would be even more present with them, and in them, through His Spirit, but this was the promise of what was still to come. The resurrection of Christ is so much sweeter when we come to realize that Him whom God raised from the dead is not only alive, but present, by means of His Spirit. May we come to grasp His presence in us, individually and corporately. Herein in joy and power. As Paul will later put it,

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you ([Romans 8:11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The greatest reality of the resurrection that can be seen today is the reality that a body which is incapable of living in a way that pleases God and fulfills His commandments, which is subject to the power of sin, can be given life by the same Spirit that raised the dead body of our Lord to life. The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead can give life to our dead bodies. Here is a reality of the resurrection which the disciples were soon to experience. May we experience it as well.

153 It may well be, as some have suggested, that Luke had already begun to write Acts by this time.

154 Interestingly enough, the marginal notes and references are virtually barren at this point, not giving us specific texts, either. The commentaries, too, are not very helpful.

155 This emphatic “himself” seems to underscore the fact that it was Jesus himself, the same Jesus as had been with them, the one about whose resurrection they were talking, was among them. He was personally present.

156 Compare [Matthew 14:26](javascript:%7b%7d) and context, where Jesus was seen by His disciples, walking on the water near their boat. Thinking that He was a ghost, they were very frightened.

157 Some have thought our Lord’s invitation to “touch” Him to be a contradiction to His words to Mary: “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father… ” ([John 20:17](javascript:%7b%7d), KJV). The problem is mainly with the translation of the King James Version. The NASB renders the Lord’s words: “Stop clinging to Me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father… ” It was not her touching Jesus which was forbidden, but her clinging to Jesus as though she would never let Him go. The fact was, He must go to the Father, and thus she must “let go.” The contradiction thus vaporizes. Jesus invited men to touch Him, to see that His body was real, but not to attempt to keep Him with them forever. His presence would be more intimate after His ascension, because He would not only dwell among them, but in them, through His Spirit.

158 The word peace is often found in the epistles, especially in the introductions. While “peace” may be a common form of salutation, its meaning is much deeper. Thus, the term should and must be understood in terms of the meaning given to it by our Lord, by the gospel, and by the epistles. Neither Jesus nor the apostles used words lightly.

# Joy Hindering Faith

By [Charles Haddon Spurgeon](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/author-index/charles-haddon-spurgeon), May 25, 1890, Scripture: [Luke 24:41-45](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/scripture-index/luke), No. 2279  
*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/joy-hindering-faith#flipbook/*

##### “And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which wore written m the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”— Luke xxiv. 41— 45.

THE disciples were gathered together with the doors of the house fast closed, for they were afraid of the Jewish mob. Suddenly HE came, HE who was chief in their thoughts, the Christ whom they had soon dead upon the cross, whom some of them had helped to bury. There he stood before them, and “they were terrified and affrighted.” As on a former occasion, on the Sea of Galilee, so now they said, “It is a spirit,” and they cried out for fear. The Saviour did his best to disabuse their minds of their mistake. He said to them, “Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.” He went as far as he well could go to prove that he was a real man, composed of real flesh and bones.

     Then they believed, for it was perfectly clear that he had risen from the dead, and was in their midst. They had hardly begun to believe that their Lord was really with them, before it seemed too good to be true. A wave of joy came rolling up, and then appeared to be sucked back again, and they seemed to be sucked back by it. They believed not for joy; they were astounded; they were full of wonder. They did believe, else they would have had no joy; but the very joy swallowed up the thing of which it was born, and they did not believe because of the excess of joy. This is an experience which has been very common; and I merely take this text to-night that I may deal with some persons who have found Christ, and are saved, but who are now troubled because it seems too good to be true.

     First, then, to-night, I shall speak, if I have strength to do so, upon the difficulty under which they laboured: “They yet believed not for joy.” Secondly, I shall speak upon the manner in which our Lord helped them to get over the difficulty. He first ate a piece of fish and a portion of a honeycomb in their presence, and then opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

     I. First, then, THE DIFFICULTY UNDER WHICH THEY LABOURED. “They believed not for joy.”

     This is not the only instance in which joy has seemed to stop the flow of faith. It has occurred on other occasions. You have an early instance of it in the Book of Genesis. Will you kindly turn to Genesis xlv. 25, 26? Jacob had lost his beloved Joseph; he believed him to be dead; he had been shown a bloody coat which he knew was his son’s; but now the brothers come back from Egypt with news that Joseph is yet alive, and is governor over all the land of Egypt. “And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not.” It was too good to be true, and his heart sank within him. “You must be deceiving me,” he said. He knew that his sons had been liars before; indeed, if this report was true, they had been liars before, and now he cannot believe their news, it is too much for him, and the old man swoons away. So have I met with many who had been told that Christ had saved them, and they believed it; and after believing it, it seemed as if it was presumption to believe any such thing, and they were thrown back into doubt and despondency again.

     Job was once in a similar condition, for he says in his Book, the ninth chapter, and the sixteenth verse, “If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.” He had such a fear of God, he saw so much of his own unworthiness, and of God’s greatness, that he says that, if he had prayed, and God had heard him, he could not have believed it to be true. This is a more spiritual case than that of Jacob; but it makes a very good parallel instance as to the fact that joy itself may cause unbelief.

     The same idea comes up in Psalm cxxvi. You remember the words, “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.” They seemed to say, “We could not believe it. We thought it was all imagination, a freak of fancy, the high play of spirits in dreamland; surely it cannot be true.”

     If you want another case, you have that of Peter as recorded in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. When Peter had been brought out of prison, the angel led him into the street, and he found that he was free; but he “wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.” He could not believe that every barrier to his escape had been removed, and that he was really out of prison. There is a young woman mentioned in the same chapter, who was very much of the same mind as Peter. Read the thirteenth and fourteenth verses: “And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter’s voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.” Why did she not let him in? Ah! she was too glad to do that. As the woman at the well left her waterpot when she found Christ, so did Rhoda leave Peter standing outside the door; she was too glad to let him in. A hungry man, when he at last finds bread, may be too glad to eat. A thirsty man may come to the fountain, and for a moment be too glad to stoop down and drink of its cooling stream. Men and women are strange paradoxes. We are made up of paradoxes; we are the most curious creatures in all the world. We believe and get glad, and then we disbelieve because we are glad, for we think that it cannot be true joy, or true faith. I do not understand you, my brethren, because I do not understand myself; and I do not believe that you understand yourselves. The mercy is that you do not need to understand yourselves; you are in the hands of a great Physician who knows all about you, and who will prescribe for you where you cannot even tell what is the matter with yourself.

     I have given you these instances out of the Scriptures; but such cases are common enough in our experience. Here is one who has heard preached the doctrine of immediate salvation by faith; he understands that—

“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full through his blood.”

He has believed, and he has received redemption in full; and now he says to himself, “Can it be really true? What! all my sins forgiven? Am I whiter than snow? That great sin of mine, that seemed to turn all my being to crimson and scarlet, is that washed out?” It seems too good to be true; and the man’s doubts come thick upon him by reason of the very greatness of the pardon which he has grasped.

     Suppose, further, that it is whispered in his ear, “You are redeemed from among men by a special redemption, for Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; the Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep; and you are a part of his Church, you are one of his sheep; and therefore specially and peculiarly redeemed out of mankind.” As he turns it over, he believes in a general redemption for all sinners; but he cannot believe in this special, peculiar, effective substitution; and he says to himself, “It is too wonderful to be mine. For me to have a special part in what Christ did, how can that be?” You first rejoice because you believe it, and then you begin to doubt it because you rejoice. Perhaps it is whispered in your ear still further, “You were chosen from before the foundation of the world, you are espoused to Christ, married unto him in an everlasting wedlock, you are a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and because he lives, you shall live also; you shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory.” You feel so full of delight that you can hardly bear yourself; but you have scarcely begun to be delighted before the whisper comes, “It is too good to be true; it must be all a mistake;” and so you believe not for joy.

     Suppose that you should sometimes have those high enjoyments, those love-feasts, those banquets in the hall of love with Christ; suppose that you should come to lean your head, with holy John, upon his bosom, and not only know his love, but be caught up, as it were, into the third heaven of immediate fellowship with him. Now, you feel as if you could die for very joy, until there comes this cold, shivering doubt, “You are altogether mistaken; you are a mere fanatic; you are an enthusiast; for God could not have admitted a man, such as you are, into such close fellowship.” Often have I met with persons troubled in this manner; and it is to them that I speak.

     Now, let me ask, what is the occasion of this difficulty? Why do we get these doubts about the great mercy of God? I answer, first, because of a deep sense of unworthiness. If any man here could see himself as he is, and then could see the fulness of God’s love to him, I believe that it would make every individual hair of his head stand upright with astonishment; and, next to that, it would carry him right away with a ravishment of adoring wonder. “Such a wretch, such a beast, such an almost devil as I was, and yet loved of God!” It would startle him. Hear how David puts it, “So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand.” The sense of our own desert makes it seem too good to be true that we should really be saved.

     Next, the habitude of fear in which some of us were found, creates this difficulty. We were accustomed to think of our sin despairingly. Month after month, some of us could see no hope; nay, not a ray of light; so that, when the light did come, it was too much for our poor eyes. Have you never gone suddenly into the light, and found yourself less able to see than you were when you were in the dark?

“When God reveal’d his gracious name  
And changed my mournful state,  
My rapture seem’d a pleasing dream,  
The grace appear’d so great,”

because of the mournful state in which I had been before.

     Then, perhaps, most of all it seems hard to believe because of the intensity of our former anxiety. These disciples had been intensely thoughtful about Christ, and anxious about him, and that was why they could not in a moment believe that he was really risen from the dead. And when a man has been thinking long about his soul, when he has felt his sin like lead, when he has looked into the awful burnings of infinite justice, when he has heard, as it were, the sentence, “Depart, ye cursed,” ringing in his ears, do you wonder that he wants to be quite sure that he is really forgiven? He cannot take that for granted. He looks, and looks, and looks, and looks again; and he cannot rest till he is certain that his sin is all blotted out, and that he is “accepted in the Beloved” Hence, even the very delightfulness of the idea of being justified by faith in Christ causes a doubt to enter the heart.

     Further, I do not wonder that the doubt comes in when you think of the simplicity of the way of salvation. Look! I have been for years trying to save myself; I have gone to Abana and Pharpar, and washed, and washed, and washed, and I am still a leper; and then, one day, I do but believe, I do but go and wash in Jordan, and at once my leprosy is gone. I should think that, if the woman, whose issue of blood was staunched when she touched the hem of Christ’s garment, felt in her body that she was healed of that plague, she must also a moment after have had the fear, “But surely it will come back again; I cannot have been cured in so simple a way. I have been to all the doctors, and have spent all my money, and I only grew worse. Am I really healed?” So, when a sinner sees himself saved by nothing but believing, by simply trusting Christ, do you wonder that an early thought with him is, “This must be too good to be true, to be saved so simply”?

     Add to this the immediateness of divine grace, and you understand where the difficulty arises. If it took a month to save a man, if it took seven years to put sin away, I could understand that by degrees we should come to believe in the process, though I do not know but what we might very likely get fresh doubts out of that process; but to be saved in a moment, to pass from death to life in less than the twinkling of an eye, all sin forgiven more quickly than a watch can tick; this is the work of salvation, the giving of the new birth, the passing of the act of indemnity and oblivion, and this takes no time whatever.

“’Tis done! the great transaction’s done;  
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine.”

And then the saved soul turns round, and says, “Can it be true that I am really saved; I who just now was in the very depths of despair?”

     Now, I am only going to deal with this difficulty in the following few words, to show you that it has no solid basis. Thou sayest, “Can this be true?” because it is so good. My answer is— You want something good, do you not? You want something greatly good. Could anything save you but a great act of grace? Tell me. Are you not of Richard Baxter’s mind when he prayed, “Lord, give me great mercy, or no mercy; for little mercy will not serve my turn”? If anybody says, “It is too good to be true,” say, “It is no better than I want. I want perfect pardon; I want complete renewal; I want to be made a child of God; I want to be saved.” It is not too good to be true; for it is not too good to be what you want.

     Do you not think, also, that great things belong to God? Do you expect God to be little in his mercy, little in his gifts, little in his grace? You make a great mistake if you do; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than man’s ways. The greatness of the goodness which you receive should be to you a letter of commendation. If it were little, it might come from man. If it be too great to come from man, that proves that it comes from God. Let the greatness rather reassure you than cause you to doubt. When a doubt arises from the simple way of salvation, let me put this to you— What other way would save you? I know that I shall never get to heaven by any way but the way of faith; I have not even a fragment of confidence in anything that I have ever done, or ever designed to do.

“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

     O my dear hearer, you may surely be content with a way that suits you, the way of believing! “It is very easy,” you say. It is not too easy for you; you could not go a harder way. To faint away into the arms of Christ, and throw your whole weight upon him, let it not seem too simple for you, for this is all that you can do; ay, and more than you ever will do unless the grace of God leads you to do it. Do not, therefore, doubt the way because it is so simple. What other way could you have?

     Once more, do not say that the gift of God’s grace is too good to be true, for those of us who live in the daily enjoyment of it are by nature no better than you, and yet it has come to us. Why should it not come to you? I never saw the man yet whom I would have put behind myself in the matter of salvation. If I had had to guess which man in this congregation would not be saved, I should not have guessed any man but myself. I stood in the rear rank; not that I had openly sinned worse than others, but there were certain elements of character that caused me to despair; yet I was fetched in by God’s grace, and why should not you also be brought in? “Ah!” say you, “I am a very odd person.” So am I; you are not odder than I am. “Oh!” says one, “but I am such a strange body.” So am I; I am a lot out of all the catalogues. Whosoever you are, be you who you may, come along to Christ; he cannot cast you away, for he has said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Come to Christ, dear friend, and he will not cast you out. This truth is not too good to be true; if I have not found it too good to be true, you will not find it too good to be true. Lay hold of it, and believe it.

     Thus I have tried to set before you the difficulty that the disciples were in when they believed not for joy.

     II. Now, in the second place, I shall only be able to speak briefly upon THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR LORD HELPED THEM TO GET OVER THE DIFFICULTY.

     Of course, their main point was that they could not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead; it seemed too good to be true.

     The Lord helped them out, first, by a fuller view of what he could do. They had handled him; they had seen and felt that he was real substantial materialism, composed of flesh and blood, which spirits have not. He takes a piece of fish, and eats it; he takes a piece of honeycomb, dripping with honey, and eats it; and, as I think, he gave them a part of the same food. If they were not satisfied with looking at him, and handling him, they should have a further evidence that he was in the body; for he could eat and drink like any other individual.

     Now, I pray the Lord to give to any here, who say, “It is too good to be true,” a clearer view of himself. If you will think more of him who brings you this great salvation, you will not be less astonished, but you will be less doubtful. Think of who he was, God, in the bosom of the Father; and the Father, in giving him, gave himself. It is no trifling salvation, depend upon it, that God comes to work out. If it had been a small salvation, he might have sent Gabriel, and said to him, “Go and save those sinners”; but as God himself comes to do the work, you may depend upon it that it is a great salvation.

     And when our Lord came here, he not only lived and laboured, but he suffered. He was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He was mocked, spit upon, scourged, crucified. He died. He who only hath immortality, died. Does that cross over yonder mean a little salvation? Do the groans of Christ mean little gifts for men? Do those gory shoulders, ploughed by the lash, mean tribes for trifling sinners? Do the five wounds, and the cruel scorn, and the great passion, all mean a small salvation for sinners? Oh! no, beloved, they mean great salvation for giant sinners, the sons of Anak, a great salvation for the biggest sinners that ever lived. Think of the cross of Calvary, and Christ on it, and you will never say that the great salvation he wrought out is too good to be true.

     But he is alive again, and he has gone up yonder, through the shining ranks of cherubim and seraphim, to the throne of God. And what is he doing? Pleading for sinners, making intercession for the transgressors. Is that a little thing for which the Christ prays? He might have made one of his saints to be the intercessor if it had been some trifling thing; but it is a great, priceless, infinite boon for which Christ prays before the Father.

     Listen, once more. Christ has joined the glory of his name with the work of salvation. He cares more to be a Saviour than to be a King. His highest glory comes from his rescuing men from going down into the pit. Creation glorifies God. The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy when the world was made; but God did not think that was a work to rejoice over; he merely said that it was good. He could have made fifty more worlds, ay, fifty million worlds, if he had pleased. But when Jesus saves men by laying down his life for his chosen, it is written, “He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” Think of Jehovah, the Triune God, bursting into song! He sings; for all his glory is wrapped up in the salvation of men. Is it then a trifle? No. I rejoice in the greatness of salvation; and believe in it the more because it is so great, and so worthy of the glory of God. I hope that neither you nor I will fall into the difficulty of the disciples when they believed not for joy.

     But now our Saviour did another thing. After thus manifesting himself, he began to open up to them the Scriptures. Ah! that is what we all want for the removal of our doubts. The least read Book in the world, in proportion to its circulation, is the Bible. I believe that “Jack the Giant Killer” is more read than the Bible in proportion to the number of persons who have the books. It is sad that it should be so. There is the daily paper, and there is the weekly religious paper, as it is called, and these two together put on the table hide away the Bible. We need to read our Bibles more; we must read our Bibles more. If we do, what shall we read there?

     Well, we shall read of a great fall that took place in the Garden of Eden. You know, they tell us now that, when Adam fell, he broke his little finger, and it was done up, and he recovered; but that is not what the Bible says. He broke his neck, and a great deal more than his neck. Oh, what a fall was there, my brethren! Then you and I and all of us fell down. It was a fall which dislocated man altogether. Well, now, for a great fall you must have a great salvation. Therefore do not be astonished when you read of a great salvation. It is involved in the meaning of the great disaster of the fall.

     Then, the fall brought on great depravity. Although they make it out now that man, through the fall, has only suffered very slightly, just a little toothache, or something of that sort, yet the Scripture does not tell us so. His whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint, and from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head he is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Now you must have a great salvation to meet this great depravity. There must be a great work of grace to turn this ship right-about, to lay a mighty hand upon the helm, and reverse its course.

     Next, beloved, if you read the Bible carefully, you will find that there is such a thing as great sin. Ah! you do not need to read your Bible for that. Beading your own heart, by the light of the Bible, and remembering that every evil thought as well as every evil word, ay, and every evil imagination, is sin before God, you will see what a mass of sin one single human being is defiled with. You want a great salvation because of great sin.

     Further, if you read your Bibles, you will find that there is a great hell. Everything in the Bible is according to scale. When men talk of a little hell, it is because they think they have only a little sin, and believe in a little Saviour; it is all little together. But when you get a great sense of sin, you want a great Saviour, and feel that, if you do not have him, you will fall into a great destruction, and suffer a great punishment at the hands of the great God. As you would escape a great hell, believe in a great salvation, and henceforth never be staggered because it is great.

     And then there is a great heaven. Oh, what a heaven! Have any of us any idea of what it will be like? We sit and meditate upon it, and we sing about it, and we sometimes half think that we are there; but we are not by a very long way. When we once get inside the gates, we shall say, with the Queen of Sheba, “The half was not told me.”

“Then shall I see, and hear, and know  
All I desired or wish’d below;  
And every power find sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy.”

To get you there, you must have a great salvation. Therefore, do not begin to say, “It is too good to be true.” Come, now, surely you are not going to be a fool, and have the world, and give up your hope of going to heaven. I am often wonderstruck at tin? way in which God, in his infinite love, makes some men go the way that they never thought of going. There are persons in this house to-night, with whom I have conversed lately, children of ungodly parents, brought up in the midst of worldly amusements. Suddenly, softness fell upon their hearts, and they began to think; the things that they loved they began to loathe; they could not tell why; they sought the house of prayer; they learnt the way of salvation, and laid hold on Christ. When they go home to-night, there is not one of the family that will welcome them; and they themselves strove hard to get away when God began to work upon their heart; but the harpooner in this pulpit, by God’s grace, sent a harpoon in so deep that, whales as they were, they could never get it out. They dived deep into the sea of greater sin; but that harpoon hold them. The next time that they came up to breathe, they got another harpoon, and they were at last wounded to such an extent that they had to yield; and now they are yielding, with the full concurrence of their will, to the Lord who has mastered them, and led them captive, and now leads them in triumph. Glory be to God for this! You have to go to heaven, my friend, anyhow; you are bound for glory, and you must go there. There is a tug, just in front of you, that will draw you there; and you shall not be lost on the way. Wherefore, if such be your grand destiny, do not wonder that, on the voyage, you have great things from God almost too great, at times, to be believed.

     I have done when I have said one thing more. If even joy sometimes hinders our believing, do not let us think much about joy, or much about sorrow. The man who always thinks about being comfortable is generally the most uncomfortable being in the world; and the man who is always thinking about being happy goes the right way to work to be always unhappy. If we are to be saved by our feelings, we shall got saved and lost every other day, for we are just like the weather-glass. They said to me yesterday, “The glass is going back.” Very likely it was; but it does not rain for all that. Then another day they say, “The glass is going up,” and then I find it generally does rain; so I give up the glasses, and begin to wonder whether there is any truth in them at all. Sometimes my feelings say to me, “You are no child of God,” and then I begin to pray, and so I know that my feelings have deceived me. Another time they say to me, “Oh, you are a child of God, that is certain!” and then I get as proud as Lucifer, and that a child of God should never be. What is the good of looking to your feelings at all? Walk by faith. Believe the gospel. Cling to God’s promises. If they fail you, all is lost; but they cannot fail you. Best in the finished work of Christ, and as for joys and sorrows,—

“Let them come, and let them go,  
Fickle as the winds that blow.”

You need place no reliance upon them. Hold on to this, “Christ died for the ungodly.” “He that believeth in him is justified from all things.” “He that believeth in him is not condemned.” Hold you to that, and then come what will, sink or swim, all will be well with your souls.

     The Lord bring us all to that blessed condition, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

# Beginning at Jerusalem

A Sermon  
[(No. 1729)](http://archive.spurgeon.org/index/c29.php)  
Delivered on Thursday Evening, June 14th, 1883, by  
C. H. SPURGEON,  
At the [Metropolitan Tabernacle,](http://www.metropolitantabernacle.org/index.html) Newington

*"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."—Luke 24:47.*

The servants of God were not left to originate a gospel for themselves, as certain modern teachers appear to do, nor were they even left to map out their mode of procedure in the spreading of the glad tidings. They were told by their great Master *what to preach,* and *where to preach it,* and *how to preach it,* and even where to begin to preach it. There is ample room for the exercise of our thought in obeying Christ's commands; but the worldly wise in these days call no one a thoughtful person who is content to be a docile follower of Jesus. They call themselves "thoughtful and cultured" simply because they set up their own thoughts in opposition to the thoughts of God. It were well if they would remember the old proverb—"Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips." As a rule those who call themselves "intellectual" are by no means persons of great intellect. Great minds seldom proclaim their own greatness. These boasters are not satisfied to be "followers of God, as dear children," but must strike out a path for themselves; this reveals their folly rather than their culture. We shall find use for every faculty which we possess, even if we are endowed with ten talents, in doing just as we are bidden by our Lord. Implicit obedience is not thoughtless: on the contrary, it is necessary to its completeness that heart and mind should be active in it.  
I. Ye that would faithfully serve Christ note carefully how he taught his disciples WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH. We find different descriptions of the subject of our preaching, but on this occasion it is comprised in two things—*repentance and remission of sins.* I am glad to find in this verse that old- fashioned virtue called *repentance.* It used to be preached, but it has gone out of fashion now. Indeed, we are told that we always misunderstood the meaning of the word "repentance"; and that it simply means a "change of mind," and nothing more. I wish that those who are so wise in their Greek knew a little more of that language, for they would not be so ready with their infallible statements. True, the word does signify a change of mind, but in its Scriptural connection it indicates a change of mind of an unusual character. It is not such a fitful thing as men mean when they speak of changing their minds, as some people do fifty times a day; but it is a change of mind of a deeper kind. Gospel repentance is a change of mind of the most radical sort—such a change as never was wrought in any man except by the Spirit of God. We mean to teach repentance, the old-fashioned repentance, too; and I do not know a better description of it that the child's verse:—

"Repentance is to leave  
The things we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing so no more."  
Let every man understand that he will never have remission of sin while he is in love with sin; and that if he abides in sin he cannot obtain the pardon of sin. There must be a hatred of sin, a loathing of it, and a turning from it, or it is not blotted out. We are to preach *repentance as a duty.* "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." He that has sinned is bound to repent of having sinned: it is the least that he can do. How can any man ask God for mercy while he abides in his sin?  
We are to preach *the acceptableness of repentance.* In itself considered there is nothing in repentance deserving of the favour of God; but, the Lord Jesus Christ having come, we read, "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy." God accepts repentance for the sake of his dear Son. He smiles upon the penitent sinner, and puts away his iniquities. this we are to make known on all sides.  
We are also to preach *the motives of repentance*—that men may not repent from mere fear of hell, but they must repent of sin itself. Every thief is sorry when he has to go to prison: every murderer is sorry when the noose is about his neck: the sinner must repent, not because of the punishment of sin, but because his sin is sin against a pardoning God, sin against a bleeding Saviour, sin against a holy law, sin against a tender gospel. The true penitent repents of sin against God, and he would do so even if there were no punishment. When he is forgiven, he repents of sin more than ever; for he sees more clearly than ever the wickedness of offending so gracious a God.  
We are to preach *repentance in its perpetuity.* Repentance is not a grace which is only to be exercised by us for a week or so at the beginning of our Christian career: it is to attend us all the way to heaven. Faith and repentance are to be inseparable companions throughout our pilgrimage to glory. Repenting of our sin, and trusting in the great Sinbearer, is to be the tenor of our lives; and we are to preach to men that it must be so.  
We are to tell them of *the source of repentance,* namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted on high to *give* repentance and remission of sins. Repentance is a plant that never grows on nature's dunghill: the nature must be changed, and repentance must be implanted by the Holy Spirit, or it will never flourish in our hearts. We preach repentance as a fruit of the Spirit, or else we greatly err.  
Our second theme is to be *remission of sins.* What a blessed subject is this! To preach the full pardon of sin—that it is blotted out once for all; the free pardon of sin—that God forgives voluntarily of his own grace; free forgiveness for the very chief of sinners for all their sins, however black they may be; is not this a grand subject? We are to preach a final and irreversible remission; not a pardon which is given and taken back again, so that a man may have his sins forgiven and yet be punished for them. I loathe such a gospel as that, and could not preach it. It would come with an ill grace from these lips. But the pardon of God once given stands for ever. If he has cast our sin into the depths of the sea it will never be washed up again.If he has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west, how can they return to condemn us? Once washed in the blood of the Lamb we are clean. The deed is done: the one offering has put away for ever all the guilt of believers.  
Now this is what we are to preach—free, full, irreversible pardon for all that repent of sin, and lay hold on Christ by faith. O servants of the Lord, be not ashamed to declare it, for this is your message!  
II. Next to this, we are told WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. The text says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations.* Here, then, we have the divine warrant for missions. They are no speculations, or enthusiastic dreams; they are matters of divine command. I daresay you have heard of what the Duke of Wellington said to a missionary in India who was questioning whether it was of any use to preach the gospel to the Hindus. "What are your marching orders?" said this man of discipline and obedience. "What are your marching orders?" that is the deciding question. Now the marching orders are, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." What a wonder it is that the church did not see this long before. After her first days she seems to have fallen asleep, and it is scarcely a hundred years ago since in the providence and grace of God the church began to wake to her high enterprise. We are to preach the gospel everywhere: missions are to be universal. All nations need the preaching of the word. The gospel is a remedy for every human ill among all the races that live upon the face of the earth. Some out of all nations shall receive it; for there shall be gathered before the eternal throne men out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue. No nation will utterly refuse it: there will be found a remnant according to the election of grace even among the most perverse of the tribes of men.  
We ought to preach it to every creature, for it is written that it behoved to be so. Read the forty-sixth verse: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: . . . and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations." Brethren, there was a divine necessity that Christ should die, and an equally imperative *must* that he should arise again from the dead; but there is an equally absolute necessity that Jesus should be preached to every creature under heaven. It behooves to be so. Who, then, will linger? Let us each one, according to his ability and opportunity, tell to all around us the story of the forgiveness of sin through the Mediator's sacrifice to as many as confess their sin and forsake it. We are bidden to preach repentance of sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, let us not be slow to do so.  
III. But this is not all . We are actually told HOW TO PREACH IT. Repentance and remission are to be preached *in Christ's name.* What does this mean? Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the gospel to others, because *Christ orders us to do so?* In Christ's name we *must* do it. Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out against them. My brethren, you must proclaim the gospel according to your ability: it is not a thing which you may do or may not do at your own discretion; but you *must* do it if you have any respect for your Saviour's name. If you dare pray in that name, if you dare hope in that name, if you hear the music of joy in that name, then in the name of Jesus Christ preach the gospel in every land.  
But it means more than that. Not only preach it under his orders, but preach it *on his authority.* The true servant of Christ has his Master to back him up. The Lord Jesus will seal by threatening or by grace the word of his faithful messengers. If we threaten the ungodly, the threatening shall be fulfilled. If we announce God's promise to the penitent, that promise shall be surely kept. The Lord Jesus will not let the words of his own ambassadors fall to the ground. "Lo, I am with you alway," says he, "even to the end of the world. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." You have Christ with you: teach the nations by his authority.  
But does it not mean, also, that *the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of his name?* Oh, sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name! Oh, guilty conscience, there would be no ease for you through the remission of sin if it were not that the blessed name of Jesus is sweet to the Lord God of hosts! We dare preach pardon to you in his name. The blood has been shed and sprinkled on the burning throne: the Christ has gone in within the veil, and stands there "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Salvation in his name there is assuredly, and this is our glory; but "there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." That name has a fullness of saving efficacy, and if you will but rest in it, you shall find salvation, and find it now. Thus you see we are not bidden to go forth and say—We preach you the gospel in the name of our own reason; or we preach you the gospel in the name of the church to which we belong, or by the authority of a synod, or a bishop, or a creed, or a whole church. No, we declare the truth in the name of Christ. Christ has set his honour to pawn for the truth of the gospel. He will lose his glory if sinners that believe and repent are not saved. Dishonour will come to the Son of God if any man repenting of sin is not accepted before God. For his name's sake he will not cast away one that comes to him. O chief of sinners! he will receive you if you will come. He cannot reject you; that were to be false to his own promise, untrue to his own nature.  
Be sure then that you preach in Christ's name. If you preach in your own name it is poor work. A man says to me, "I cannot tell a dead sinner to live. I cannot tell a blind sinner to see. I cannot invite an insensible sinner; it is absurd; for the sinner is altogether without strength." No, dear sir, I do not suppose you can do so while you speak according to carnal reason. Does the good man say that God has not sent him to bid the dead arise? Then let him not do it. Pray let him not try to do what God never sent him to do. Let him go home and go to bed; he will probably do as much good asleep as awake. But as for me, I am sent to preach in Jesus' name, "Believe and live," and therefore I am not slow to do so. I am sent on purpose to say, Ye dry bones, live, and I dare do no otherwise. No faithful minister who knows what faith means looks to the sinner for power to believe, or looks to himself for power; but he looks to the Master that sent him for power; and in the name of Christ he says to the withered hand, "Be stretched out," and he says to the dead, "Come forth!" and he does not speak in vain. Oh, yes, it is in Christ's name that we fulfill our office! We are miracle-workers: he endows us with *his* power if in faith we tell out his gospel. All of you who try to speak the gospel may do it without fear of failure; for the power lies in the gospel and in the Spirit who goes with it, not in the preacher or in the sinner. Blessed be the name of God, we have this treasure in earthen vessels but the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. So he tells us, then, what to preach, and where to preach it, and how to preach it.  
IV. Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse, and that is, that he told his disciples WHERE TO BEGIN.  
I have heard of a Puritan who had in his sermon forty-five main divisions, and about ten subdivisions under every head. He might be said largely to divide the word of truth, even if he did not rightly divide it. Now, I have nine subheads to-night, and yet I hope I shall not detain you beyond the usual time. I cannot make fewer of them and give the full meaning of this sentence—"Beginning at Jerusalem." The apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to begin at Jerusalem. Why?  
First, because *it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem:* "Thus it is written, and thus it behooves, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It was so written: I will give you two or three proofs. Read in the second chapter of Isaiah, at the third verse: "Out of Zion shall come forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah's word would have fallen to the ground if the preaching had not begun at Jerusalem; but now, to the very letter, this prediction of the evangelical prophet is kept. In Joel, that famous Joel who prophesied the descent of the Spirit and the speaking of the servants and the handmaidens, we read in the second chapter, at the thirty-second verse, "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance;" and again in the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of the same prophet—"The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." As if the Lord were as a strong lion in the midst of Jerusalem, and as if the sounding forth of the gospel was like the roaring of his voice, that the nations might hear and tremble. How could those promises have been kept if the gospel had begun to be preached in the deserts of Arabia, or if the first church of Christ had been set up at Damascus? Note another passage. Obadiah in his twenty-first verse says, "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion." Who were these saviours but those who instrumentally became so by proclaiming the Saviour Jesus Christ. And Zechariah, who is full of visions, but not visionary, says in his fourteenth chapter at the eighth verse, "Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem," and then he describes the course of those waters till they flowed even unto the Dead Sea, and made its waters sweet. Because the Bible said so, therefore they must begin at Jerusalem, and I call your attention to this, for our Lord Jesus was particular that every jot and tittle of the Old Testament should be fulfilled. Do you not think that this reads us a lesson that we should be very reverent towards every sentence of both the Old and the New Testaments; and if there be anything taught by our Lord ought not his people to consider well, and act according to the divine ordinance? I am afraid that many take their religion from their parents, or from the church that is nearest to them, without weighing it. "I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment." Oh, that we may be more faithful servants of the Lord; for if we are faithful we shall be careful upon what men call small points, such as the doctrine of baptism, the manner of the Lord's Supper, or this small point of where the gospel should be first preached. It must begin at Jerusalem and nowhere else; for the Scripture cannot be broken. See ye to it, then, that ye walk according to the word of God, and that ye test everything by it. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." So much on that first head.  
Secondly, I suppose that our Lord bade his disciples begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, because *it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the gospel had occurred.* It was there that Jesus Christ died, that he was buried, that he rose again, and that he ascended into heaven. All these things happened at Jerusalem, or not far from it. Therefore the witness-bearing of the apostles must be upon the spot where if they lie they can be confuted, and where persons can come forward and say, "It was not so; you are deceivers." If our Lord had said, "Do not say anything in Jerusalem. Go away to Rome and begin preaching there," it would not have looked quite so straightforward as it now does when he says, "Preach this before the scribes and the priests. They know that it is so. They have bribed the soldiers to say otherwise, but they know that I have risen." The disciples were to preach the gospel in the streets of Jerusalem. There were people in that city who were once lame, and who leaped like a hart when Jesus healed them. There were men and women there who ate of the fish and that bread that Jesus multiplied. There were people in Jerusalem who had seen their children and their friends healed of dreadful diseases. Jesus bids his disciples beard the lion in his den, and declare the gospel on the spot where, if it had been untrue, it would have been contradicted with violence. Our Lord seemed to say, "Point to the very place where my death took place. Tell them that they crucified me; and see if they dare deny it. Bring it home to their consciences that they rejected the Christ of God." Hence it was that, coming to the very people who had seen these things, the preaching of Peter had unusual force about it: in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit there was also this—that he was telling them of a crime which they had newly committed, and could not deny: and when they saw their error they turned to God with penitent hearts. I like this thought—that they were to begin at Jerusalem, because there the events of the gospel occurred. This is a direction for you, dear friend: if you have been newly converted, do not be ashamed to tell those who know you. A religion which will not stand the test of the fireside is not worth much! "Oh," says one. "I have never told my husband. I get out on a Thursday night, but he does not know where I am going, and I steal in here. I have never even told my children that I am a believer. I do not like to let it be known. I am afraid that all my family would oppose me." Oh, yes; you are going to heaven, round by the back lanes. Going to sneak into glory as a rat crawls into a room through a hole in the floor! Do not attempt it. Never be ashamed of Christ. Come straight out and say to your friends, "You know what I was; but now I have become a disciple of Jesus Christ." Begin at Jerusalem: it was your Lord's command. He had nothing to be ashamed of. There was no falsehood in what he bade his disciples preach, and therefore he did as good as say, "Hang up my gospel to the light. It is nothing but truth, therefore display it before mine enemies' eyes." If yours is a true, genuine, thorough conversion, I do not say that you are to go up and down the street crying out that you are converted; but on due occasions you must not hide your convictions. Conceal not what the Lord has done for you, but hold up your candle in your own house.  
The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that *he knew that there would come a time when some of his disciples would despise the Jews,* and therefore he said—When you preach my gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment, and everywhere we ought to preach the gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile; Paul even says, "to the Jew first." Some seem to think that there ought to be no mission to the Jews—that there is no hope of converting them, that they are of no use when they are converted, and so on. I have even heard some who call themselves Christians speak slightingly of the Jewish people. What! and your Lord and Master a Jew! There is no race on earth so exalted as they are. They are the seed of Abraham, God's friend. We have nobles and dukes in England, but how far could they trace their pedigree? Why, up to a nobody. But the poorest Jew on earth is descended linearly from Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham. Instead of treating them with anything like disrespect, the Saviour says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Just as we say, "Ladies first," so it is "the Jew first." They take precedence among races, and are to be first waited on at the gospel feast. Jesus would have us entertain a deep regard to that nation which God chose of old, and out of which Christ also came, for he is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. He puts those first who knew him first. Let us never sneer at a Jew again; for our Lord teaches us the rule of his house when he says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Let the seed of Israel first have the gospel presented to them, and if they reject it we shall be clear of their blood. But we shall not be faithful to our orders unless we have taken note of Jews as well as Gentiles.  
The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. *Begin where you are tempted not to begin.* Naturally these disciples would have said one to another when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the street; these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us; we had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey and then commence preaching; and when this excitement is cooled down, and they have forgotten about the crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually, and say as little as we can about putting him to death." That would have been the rule of policy—that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, "Beginning at Jerusalem," and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng, and he must tell them, "This Jesus whom ye have with wicked hands crucified and slain is now risen from the dead." Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, "We believe in Jesus: let us be baptized into his sacred name." The same day there were added to the church three thousand souls, and a day or two afterwards five thousand were converted by the same kind of preaching. We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed. If we have a very strong aversion as a token that we are not called to it, we may regard it as a sign that we ought at least to try it. The devil knows you, dear friend, better than you know yourself. You see, he has been longer in the world than you have, and he knows a great deal more about human nature than you do; and so he comes to you, and he reckons you up pretty accurately, and says, "This brother would be very useful in a certain sphere of labour, and I must keep him from it." So he tells the brother that he is not called to it, and that it is not the sort of thing for him, and so on; and then he says to himself, "I have turned aside one foe from harming my cause." Yonder is a good sister. Oh, how much she might do for Christ, but Satan guides her into a work in which she will never shine; while the holy work which she could do right well is dreaded by her. I heard a beautiful story last Wednesday, when I was sitting to see inquirers, and I cannot help mentioning it here, for it may be a suggestion to some Christian who is present. A brother, who will be received into the church, was converted in the following way. He came up to London, and worked in a certain parish in the West- end. He was at work on a sewer, and a lady from one of the best houses in the West-end came to the men that were making the sewer and said, "You men, come into my servants' hall and eat your dinners. I will give you either tea or coffee with your meal, and then you will not have to go into the public-house." Some of them went in, but others did not. So the next day the lady came out, and said, "Now, I know that you think my place too fine for you. You do not like to come; so I have come out to fetch you in. While this sewer is being done I should like you to eat your dinners in my house." She got them all in; and when they had done their dinners and drank their tea or coffee she began to talk to them about Jesus Christ. The work was a month or so about, and it was every day the same. Our friend does not know the lady's name, but he knows the name of Jesus through her teaching. Friends, we lose hosts of opportunities; I am sure we do. Many ways of doing good have never occurred to our minds, but they ought to occur to us; and when they do occur we should use them. Let us crucify the flesh about this. Let us overcome natural timidity. Let us in some way or other begin at Jerusalem, which is just where we thought that we never could begin.  
Now fifthly. We are getting on, you see. "Beginning at Jerusalem," must surely mean *begin at home.* Jerusalem was the capital city of their own country. You know the old proverb, "The cobbler's wife goes barefoot." I am afraid that this proverb is verified by some Christians. They do a deal of good five miles off home, but none at home. I knew a man who used to go out with preachers every night in the week, and try to preach himself, poor soul that he was; but his children were so neglected that they were the most wicked children in the street, and they grew up in all manner of vice. The father was prancing about and looking after other people, and did not care for his own family. Now, if you are going to serve Christ to the very ends of the earth, take care that you begin at home. Dear parents, need I urge you to look to your own children? It is a great joy to me to know that the members of the church for the most part do this. When a dear sister came to me on Wednesday night with three of her children, making four that had come within the last six weeks, I felt grateful to God that parents were looking after their offspring. But if any of you are in the Sabbath-school, and never have a Sabbath-school at home; if any of you talk to strangers in the aisles, but are neglecting your own sons and daughters—oh, let it not be so! The power of a father's prayers with his arms about his boy's neck I know full well. The power of a mother's prayers with her children all kneeling round her is far greater with the young than any public ministry will be. Look well to your children: begin at Jerusalem.  
Begin with your servants. Do not let a servant live in your house in ignorance of the gospel. Do not have family prayer merely as a matter of form, but let it be a reality. Do not have one person working for you to whom you have never spoken about his or her soul.  
Begin with your brothers. Oh, the influence of sisters over brothers! I have a friend—a dear friend, too—who has long been a man of God, but in his young days he was a very loose fellow, and often he was all the night away from home. His sister used to write letters to him, and frequently while half tipsy he has read them under the street lamp. One letter which he read cut him to the quick. His sister's grief about him was too much for him, and he was compelled to seek and find the Saviour. Well has the sister been rewarded for all her love to him. Oh, dear friends, begin at Jerusalem! Begin with your brothers and sisters.  
Begin with your neighbours. Oh, this London of ours! It is a horrible place for Christian people to live in! Round about this neighbourhood scarcely can a decent person remain by reason of the vice that abounds, and the language that is heard on every side. Many of you are as much vexed to-day as Lot was when he was in Sodom. Well, bear your witness. Do not be dumb dogs, but speak up for your Lord and Master whenever you are. Look at our dear brother Lazenby, who entered a workshop where none feared the Lord, and has been the means of bringing all in the shop to God. Another shop has felt his influence, and the first recruit has come to join the church: I should not wonder if the whole of the workmen in the second shop should come, too. The Lord grant it. It is marvelous how the gospel spreads when men are in earnest, and their lives are right. God make you so to live that you show piety at home.  
Then, sixthly, *begin where much has been already done.* Begin at Jerusalem. It is hard work, dear friends, to preach to certain people: they have been preached to so long, like the people at Jerusalem. They know all about the gospel, it is hard to tell them anything fresh, and yet they have felt nothing, but remain wedded to their sins. The Jerusalem people had been taught for centuries in vain; and yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the gospel-hardened; we must labour for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them, those who have had impressions and have crushed them out, those who seem now as if they had sealed their own death-warrants and would never be saved. Do not hesitate to go to them. The Lord has done much already: it may be that he has laid the fire, and you are to strike the match and set it all alight. Many people have a love to the gospel, a love to the house of God, a love to God's people, and yet they have no saving faith. What a pity! Do not hesitate to address them. I think I hear you say, "I would rather go and preach to the outcasts." So would I; but you and I are not allowed to pick our work. Virgin soil yields the best harvest; and if a man might choose a congregation that is likely to be fruitful, he might well select those that have never heard the word before. But we have not our choice. The Saviour's disciples were to begin where the prophets had prophesied, and had been put to death; where sinners had rejected God's voice times out of mind. Therefore do not pass by your fellow-seatholders. Perhaps you say, "Sir, I have spoken to them a great many times, but I cannot make anything of them." No, *you* cannot; but God can. Try again. Suppose that for twenty years you were to sit in this Tabernacle side by side with an unconverted person, and you were to speak to that person twice every Sunday and twice in the week, and all the twenty years it should be in vain; yet if the individual was brought to Christ at last would not his conversion repay you? Is your time so very precious? Is your ability so very great? Oh, my dear friend, if you were an archangel it would be worth while for you to work a thousand years to bring one soul to Christ! A soul is such a precious jewel that you would be abundantly rewarded if a century of service only brought you one conversion. Wherefore, in working for Christ, do not hesitate to go to those who have refused the gospel hitherto, for you may yet prevail.  
Seventhly, *begin where the gospel day is short.* If you ask me where I get that thought, it is from the fact that within a very short time Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The Romans were to come there to slay men, women, and children, and break down the walls and leave not one stone upon another. And Christ's disciples knew this; wherefore their Lord said, "Begin at Jerusalem." Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end, and if he is unsaved there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Choose the old man, and do not let him remain ignorant of the gospel. Fish him up at once, for with him it is now or never, since he is on the borders of the grave. Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption—if you notice during service the deep "churchyard" cough—say to yourself, "I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead." How many a time have I seen a consumptive at Mentone apparently getting better; but I have noticed him rise from dinner with his handkerchief to his mouth and soon they have whispered, "He died of hemorrhage"—suddenly taken off. When you meet with a pining case, do not wait to be introduced, but introduce yourself; and tenderly, gently, quietly, lovingly say a word about coming to Christ at once. We ought speedily to look up those whose day of grace is short. Perhaps, also, there is a stranger near you who is going far away to a distant land, and may never hear the gospel again; therefore, if you have an opportunity, take care that you avail yourself of it, and reason with him for Jesus at once. Begin at Jerusalem: begin where the day of grace is short.  
Eighthly, begin, dear friend, *where you may expect opposition.* That is a singular thing to advise, but I recommend it because the Saviour advised it. It was as certain as that twice two are four that if they preached Christ in Jerusalem, there would be a noise, for there were persons living there who hated the very name of Jesus, for they had conspired to put him to death. If they began at Jerusalem they would arouse a ferocious opposition. But nothing is much better for the gospel than opposition. A man comes into the Tabernacle to-night, and as he goes away he says, "Yes, I was pleased and satisfied." In that man's case I have failed. But another man keeps biting his tongue, for he cannot endure the preaching. He is very angry; something in the doctrine dos not suit him, and he cries, "As long as I live I will never come here again." That man is hopeful. He begins to think. The hook has taken hold of him. Give us time, and we will have that fish. It is no ill omen when a man gets angry with the gospel. It is bad enough, but it is infinitely better than that horrible lethargy into which men fall when they do not think. Some are not good enough even to oppose the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be hopeful of the man who will not let you speak to him, he is one that you must approach again; and if, when he does let you speak to him, he seems as if he would spit on you, be grateful for it. He feels your words. You are touching him on a sore place. You will have him yet. When he swears that he does not believe a word of what you say, do not believe a word of what *he* says; for often the man who openly objects secretly believes. Just as boys whistle when they go through a churchyard in order to keep their courage up, so many a blasphemer is profane in order to silence his conscience. When he feels the hook, like the fish, the man will drag away from it. Give him line. Let him go. The hook will hold, and in due time you will have him. Do not despair. Do not think it a horrible thing that he should oppose you; you should rather be grateful for it, and go to God and cry that he will give you that soul for your hire. Begin courageously where you may expect opposition.  
And, lastly, to come to the meaning which Mr John Bunyan has put upon the text in his famous book called "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved," I have no doubt that the Saviour bade them begin at Jerusalem, *because the biggest sinners lived there.* There they lived who had crucified him. The loving Jesus bids them preach repentance and remission to them. There he lived who had pierced the Saviour's side, and they that had plaited the crown of thorns, and put it on his head. There dwell those who had mocked him and spat upon him; therefore the loving Jesus, who so freely forgives, says, "Go and preach the gospel first to them." The greatest sinners are the objects of the greatest mercy. Preach first to them. Are there any such here? My dear friend, we must preach the gospel first to you because you want it most. You are dying; your wounds are bleeding; the heavenly surgeon bids us staunch your wounds first. Others who are not so badly hurt may wait awhile, but you must be first served lest you die of your injuries. Should not this encourage you great sinners to come to Jesus, when he bids us preach to you first?  
We are to preach to you first because, when you have received him, you will praise him most. If you are saved you will encourage others to come, and you will cheer up those who have come already. We shall be glad to get fresh blood poured into the veins of the church by the conversion of big sinners who love much because they have had much forgiven. Therefore, we are to come to you *first.* Will you not come to Christ at once? Oh, that you would believe in him! Oh that you would believe in him to-night! To you is the word of this salvation sent. You old sinners—you that have added sin to sin, and done all you can do with both hands wickedly—you that have cursed his name—you that have robbed others—you that have told lies—you that have blackened yourselves with every crime, come and welcome to Jesus. Come to Christ and live at once. Mercy's door is set wide open on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come; and they are called to come first. Just as you are, come along with you. Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but now "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This night if you believe in Jesus you shall go out of these doors rejoicing that the Lord has put away your sin. To believe is to *trust*—simply to trust in Christ. It seems a very simple thing, but that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing you would more readily attend to it; but being so easy you cannot believe that it is effectual. But it is so; faith does save. Christ wants nothing of you but that you accept what he freely presents to you. Put out an empty hand, a black hand, a trembling hand; accept what Jesus gives, and salvation is yours.  
Thus have I tried to expound "Beginning at Jerusalem," O that my Lord would begin with *you.* Amen.

From John Bunyan’s “The Jerusalem Sinner Saved”  
*http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3270/3270-h/3270-h.htm*

*From toward the beginning, a word about grace and the “Jerusalem Sinner”:*

And it is to be observed, namely, that the first sermon which they preached after the ascension of Christ, it was preached to the very worst of these Jerusalem sinners, even to these that were the murderers of Jesus Christ, Acts ii. 23, for these are part of the sermon: “Ye took him, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain him.”  Yea, the next sermon, and the next, and also the next to that, was preached to the self-same murderers, to the end they might be saved; Acts iii. 14–16; chap. iv. 10, 11; chap. v. 30; chap. vii. 52.

But we will return to the first sermon that was preached to these Jerusalem sinners, by which will be manifest more than great grace, if it be duly considered.

For after that Peter, and the rest of the apostles, had, in their exhortation, persuaded these wretches to believe that they had killed the Prince of life, and after they had duly fallen under the guilt of their murder, saying, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” he replies, by an universal tender to them all in general, considering them as Christ’s killers, that if they were sorry for what they had done, and would be baptized for the remission of their sins in his name, they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; Acts ii. 37, 38.

This he said to them all, though he knew that they were such sinners.  Yea, he said it without the least stick or stop, or pause of spirit, as to whether he had best to say so or no.  Nay, so far off was Peter from making an objection against one of them, that by a particular clause in his exhortation, he endeavours, that not one of them may escape the salvation offered.  “Repent,” saith he, “and be baptized every one of you.”  I shut out never a one of you; for I am commanded by my Lord to deal with you, as it were, one by one, by the word of his salvation.  But why speaks he so particularly?  Oh! there were reasons for it.  The people with whom the apostles were now to deal, as they were murderers of our Lord, and to be charged in the general with his blood, so they had their various and particular acts of villany in the guilt thereof, now lying upon their consciences.  And the guilt of these their various and particular acts of wickedness, could not perhaps be reached to a removal thereof, but by this particular application.  Repent every one of you; be baptized every one of you, in his name, for the remission of sins, and you shall, every one of you, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

*Object*.  But I was one of them that plotted to take away his life.  May I be saved by him?

*Peter*.  Every one of you.

*Object*.  But I was one of them that bare false witness against him.  Is there grace for me?

*Peter*.  For every one of you.

*Object*.  But I was one of them that cried out, Crucify him, crucify him; and desired that Barabbas the murderer might live, rather than him.  What will become of me, think you?

*Peter*.  I am to preach repentance and remission of sins to every one of you, says Peter.

*Object*.  But I was one of them that did spit in his face when he stood before his accusers.  I also was one that mocked him, when in anguish he hanged bleeding on the tree.  Is there room for me?

*Peter*.  For every one of you, says Peter.

*Object*.  But I was one of them that in his extremity said, give him gall and vinegar to drink.  Why may not I expect the same when anguish and guilt is upon me?

*Peter*.  Repent of these your wickednesses, and here is remission of sins for every one of you.

*Object*.  But I railed on him, I reviled him, I hated him, I rejoiced to see him mocked at by others.  Can there be hopes for me?

*Peter*.  There is for every one of you.  “Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”  Oh! what a blessed “Every one of you,” is here!  How willing was Peter, and the Lord Jesus, by his ministry, to catch these murderers with the word of the gospel, that they might be made monuments of the grace of God!  How unwilling, I say, was he, that any of these should escape the hand of mercy!  Yea, what an amazing wonder it is to think, that above all the world, and above every body in it, these should have the first offer of mercy!  “Beginning at Jerusalem.”

From the middle, a word to the presumptuous:

*Sixthly*, Since Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, let souls see that they lay right hold thereof, lest they, notwithstanding, indeed come short thereof.  Faith only knows how to deal with mercy; wherefore put not in the place thereof presumption.  I have observed, that as there are herbs and flowers in our gardens, so there are their counterfeits in the field; only they are distinguished from the other by the name of wild ones.  Why, there is faith, and wild faith; and wild faith is this presumption.  I call it wild faith, because God never placed it in his garden, his church; it is only to be found in the field, the world.  I also call it wild faith, because it only grows up and is nourished where other wild notions abound.  Wherefore take heed of this, and all may be well; for this presumuptuousness is a very heinous thing in the eyes of God: “The soul,” saith he, “that doeth ought presumptuously (whether he be born in the land, or a stranger), the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people;” Numb. xv. 30.

The thoughts of this made David tremble, and pray that God would hold him back from presumptuous sins, and not suffer them to have dominion over him; Psal. xix. 13.

Now this presumption, then, puts itself in the place of faith, when it tampereth with the promise for life, while the soul is a stranger to repentance.  Wherefore you have in the text, to prevent doing thus, both repentance and remission of sins to be offered to Jerusalem; not remission without repentance: for all that repent not shall perish, let them presume on grace and the promise while they will; Luke xiii. 1–3.

Presumption, then, is that which severeth faith and repentance, concluding, that the soul shall be saved by grace, though the man was never made sorry for his sins, nor the love of the heart turned therefrom.  This is to be self-willed, as Peter has it; and this is a despising the word of the Lord, for that has put repentance and faith together; Mark i. 15.  And “because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him.”  Numb. xv. 31.

Let such therefore look to it, who yet are, and abide in their sins; for such, if they hope, as they are, to be saved, presume upon the grace of God.  Wherefore presumption and not hearkening to God’s word are put together; Deut. xvii. 12.

Again, Then men presume when they are resolved to abide in their sins, and yet expect to be saved by God’s grace through Christ.  This is as much as to say, God liketh sin as well as I do, and careth not how men live, if so be they lean upon his Son.  Of this sort are they that build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity; that judge for reward, and teach for hire, and divine for money, and lean upon the Lord; Mic. iii. 10, 11.  This is doing things with an high hand against the Lord our God, and a taking him, as it were, at the catch.  This is, as we say among men, to seek to put a trick upon God, as if he had not sufficiently fortified his proposals of grace by his holy word, against all such kind of fools as these.  But look to it.

Such will be found at the day of God, not among that great company of Jerusalem sinners that shall be saved by grace, but among those that have been the great abusers of the grace of God in the world.  Those that say, Let us sin that grace may abound, and let us do evil that good may come, their damnation is just.  And if so, they are a great way off of that salvation that is by Jesus Christ presented to the Jerusalem sinners.

I have therefore these things to propound to that Jerusalem sinner that would know, if he may be so bold as to venture himself upon this grace.

*First*, Dost thou see thy sins?

*Secondly*, Art thou weary of them?

*Thirdly*, Wouldst thou with all thy heart be saved by Jesus Christ?  I dare say no less, I dare say no more.  But if it be truly thus with thee, how great soever thy sins have been, how bad soever thou feelest thy heart, how far soever thou art from thinking that God has mercy for these: thou art the man, the Jerusalem sinner, that the Word of God has conquered, and to whom it offereth free remission of sins, by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

When the jailor cried out, “Sirs, What must I do to be saved?”  The answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”  He that sees his sins aright, is brought to his wit’s end by them; and he that is so, is willing to part from them, and to be saved by the grace of God.

If this be thy case, fear not, give no way to despair; thou presumest not, if thou believest to life everlasting in Jesus Christ: yea, Christ is prepared for such as thou art.

Therefore take good courage and believe.  The design of Satan is to tell the presumptuous, that their presuming on mercy is good; but to persuade the believer, that his believing is impudent bold dealing with God.  I never heard a presumptuous man in my life say that he was afraid that he presumed; but I have heard many an honest humble soul say, that they have been afraid that their faith has been presumption.  Why should Satan molest those whose ways he knows will bring them to him?  And who can think that he should be quiet when men take the right course to escape his hellish snares?  This, therefore, is the reason why the truly humbled is opposed, while the presumptuous goes on by wind and tide.  The truly humble Satan hates, but he laughs to see the foolery of the other.

Does thy hand and heart tremble?  Upon thee the promise smiles.  “To this man will I look,” says God, “even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word;” Isa. lxvi. 2.

What, therefore, I have said of presumption concerns not the humble in spirit at all.  I therefore am for gathering up the stones, and for taking the stumblingblocks out of the way of God’s people: and forewarning of them that lay the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their faces, and that are for presuming upon God’s mercy; and let them look to themselves; Ezek. xiv. 6–8.

Also our text stands firm as ever it did, and our observation is still of force, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners.  So then let none despair, let none presume; let none despair that are sorry for their sins, and would be saved by Jesus Christ; let none presume that abide in the liking of their sins, though they seem to know the exceeding grace of Christ; for though the door stands wide open for the reception of the penitent, yet it is fast enough barred and bolted against the presumptuous sinner.  Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows, that he shall reap.  It cannot be that God should be wheedled out of his mercy, or prevailed upon by lips of dissimulation; he knows them that trust in him, and that sincerely come to him by Christ for mercy; Nahum i. 7.

It is then not the abundance of sins committed, but the not coming heartily to God by Christ for mercy, that shuts men out of doors.  And though their not coming heartily may be said to be but a sin, yet it is such a sin as causeth that all thy other sins abide upon thee unforgiven.

God complains of this.  “They have not cried unto me with their heart; they turned, but not to the most High.  They turned feignedly;” Jer. iii. 10; Hos. vii. 14, 16.

Thus doing, his soul hates; but the penitent, humble, brokenhearted sinner, be his transgressions red as scarlet, red like crimson, in number as the sand; though his transgressions cry to heaven against him for vengeance, and seem there to cry louder than do his prayers, or tears, or groans for mercy, yet he is safe.  To this man God will look; Isa. i. 18; chap lxvi. 2.

And towards the end, a word to the fearful:

*Thirdly*, As to they fears, whatever they are, let that be supposed which is supposed before, and they are groundless, and so of no weight.

*Object*.  But I am afraid I am not elected, or chosen to salvation, though you called me fool a little before for so fearing.

*Ans*.  Though election is, in order, before calling, as to God, yet the knowledge of calling must go before the belief of my election as to myself.  Wherefore, souls that doubt of the truth of their effectual calling, do but plunge themselves into a deeper labyrinth of confusion that concern themselves with their election; I mean, while they labour to know it before they prove their calling.  “Make your calling, and so your election, sure;” 2 Pet. i. 4–11.

Wherefore, at present, lay the thoughts of thy election by, and ask thyself these questions: Do I see my lost condition?  Do I see salvation is nowhere but in Christ?  Would I share in this salvation by faith in him?  And would I, as was said before, be thoroughly saved, to wit, from the filth as from the guilt?  Do I love Christ, his Father, his saints, his words, and ways?  This is the way to prove we are elect.  Wherefore, sinner, when Satan, or thine own heart seeks to puzzle thee with election, say thou, I cannot attend to talk of this point now, but stay till I know that I am called of God to the fellowship of his Son, and then I will shew you that I am elect, and that my name is written in the book of life.

If poor distressed souls would observe this order, they might save themselves the trouble of an unprofitable labour under these unreasonable and soul-sinking doubts.

Let us therefore, upon the sight of our wretchedness, fly and venturously leap into the arms of Christ, which are now as open to receive us into his bosom, as they were when nailed to the cross.  This is coming to Christ for life aright; this is right running away from thy master to him, as was said before.  And for this we have multitudes of scriptures to support, encourage, and comfort us in our so doing.

But now, let him that doth thus be sure to look for it, for Satan will be with him to-morrow, to see if he can get him again to his old service; and if he cannot do that, then will he enter into dispute with him, to wit, about whether he be elect to life, and called indeed to partake of this Christ, to whom he is fled for succour, or whether he comes to him of his own presumptuous mind.  Therefore we are bid, as to come, so to arm ourselves with that armour which God has provided; that we may resist, quench, stand against, and withstand all the fiery darts of the devil; Eph. vi. 11–18.

If, therefore, thou findest Satan in this order to march against thee, remember then thou hadst this item about it; and betake thyself to faith and good courage; and be sober, and hope to the end.

*Object*.  But how if I should have sinned the sin unpardonable, or that called the sin against the Holy Ghost?

*Answer*.  If thou hast, thou art lost for ever; but yet before it is concluded by thee that thou hast so sinned, know that they that would be saved by Jesus Christ through faith in his blood, cannot be counted for such.

1.  Because of the promise, for that must not be frustrated: and that says, “And him that cometh to Christ, he will in no wise cast out.”  And again, “Whoso will, let him take of the water of life freely;” John vi. 37; Rev. xxi. 6; chap. xxii. 17.

But I say, how can these scriptures be fulfilled, if he that would indeed be saved, as before, has sinned the sin unpardonable?  The scriptures must not be made void, nor their truth be cast to the ground.  Here is a promise, and here is a sinner; a promise that says he shall not be cast out that comes; and the sinner comes, wherefore he must be received: consequently he that comes to Christ for life, has not, cannot have sinned that sin for which there is no forgiveness.

And this might suffice for an answer to any coming soul, that fears, though he comes, that he has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost.

2.  But again, he that has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost cannot come, has no heart to come, can by no means be made willing to come to Jesus Christ for life; for that he has received such an opinion of him, and of his things, as deters and holds him back.

1.  He counteth this blessed person, the Son of God, a magician, a conjuror, a witch, or one that did, when he was in the world, what he did by the power and spirit of the devil; Matt. ix. 34; chap. xii. 24, 25, &c.; Mark iii. 22–30.  Now he that has this opinion of this Jesus, cannot be willing to cast himself at his feet for life, or to come to him as the only way to God and to salvation.  And hence it is said again, that such an one puts him to open shame, and treadeth him under foot, that is, by contemning, reproaching, vilifying, and despising of him, as if he were the vilest one, or the greatest cheat in the world: and has therefore, as to his esteem of him, called him accursed, crucified him to himself, or counted him one hanged, as one of the worst of malefactors; Heb. vi. 6; chap. x. 29; 1 Cor. xii. 3.

2.  His blood, which is the meritorious cause of man’s redemption, even the blood of the everlasting covenant, he counteth an unholy thing, or that which has no more virtue in it to save a soul from sin than has the blood of a dog; Heb. x. 29.  For when the Apostle says, “he counts it an unholy thing,” he means, he makes it of less value than that of a sheep or cow, which were clean according to the law; and therefore must mean, that his blood was of no more worth to him in his account than was the blood of a dog, an ass, or a swine, which always was, as to sacrifices, rejected by the God of heaven, as unholy or unclean.

Now he who has no better esteem of Jesus Christ, and of his death and blood, will not be persuaded to come to him for life, or to trust in him for salvation.

3.  But further, all this must be done against manifest tokens to prove the contrary, or after the shining of gospel light upon the soul, or some considerable profession of him as the Messiah, or that he was the Saviour of the world.

1.  It must be done against manifest tokens to prove the contrary; and thus the reprobate Jews committed it when they saw the works of God, which put forth themselves in him, and called them the works of the devil and Beelzebub.

2.  It must be done against some shining light of the gospel upon them.  And thus it was with Judas, and with those who, after they were enlightened, and had tasted, and had felt something of the powers of the world to come, fell away from the faith of him, and put him to open shame and disgrace; Heb. vi. 5, 6.

3.  It must also be done after, and in opposition to one’s own open profession of him.  “For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment (which is the word of faith) delivered unto them.”

4.  All this must be done openly, before witnesses, in the face, sight, and view of the world, by word and act.  This is the sin that is unpardonable; and he that hath thus done, can never, it is impossible he ever should be renewed again to repentance, and that for a double reason; for such an one doth say, he will not; and of him God says, he shall not have the benefit of salvation by him.

*Object*.  But if this be the sin unpardonable, why is it called the sin against the Holy Ghost, and not rather the sin against the Son of God?

*Answ*.  It is called “the sin against the Holy Ghost,” because such count the works he did, which were done by the Spirit of God, the works of the spirit of the devil.  Also because all such as so reject Christ Jesus the Lord, they do it in despite of that testimony which the Holy Ghost has given of him in the holy scriptures; for the scriptures are the breathings of the Holy Ghost, as in all other things, so in that testimony they bear of the person, of the works, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Sinner, this is the sin against the Holy Ghost.  What sayst thou?  Hast thou committed it?  Nay, I know thou hast not; if thou wouldst be saved by Christ.  Yea, it is impossible that thou shouldst have done it, if indeed thou wouldst be saved by him.

No man can desire to be saved by him, whom he yet judgeth to be an impostor, a magician, a witch.  No man can hope for redemption by that blood which he yet counteth an unholy thing.  Nor will God ever suffer such an one to repent, who has, after light and profession of him, thus horribly and devil-like contemned and trampled upon him.

True, words and wars and blasphemies against this Son of man are pardonable; but then they must be done ignorantly and in unbelief.  Also all blasphemous thoughts are likewise such as may be passed by, if the soul afflicted with them indeed is sorry for them; 1 Tim. i. 13–15; Mar. iii. 28.

All but this, sinner, all but this!  If God had said, he will forgive one sin, it had been undeserved grace; but when he says he will pardon all but one, this is grace to the height.

Nor is that one unpardonable otherwise, but because the Saviour that should save them is rejected and put away.

We read of Jacob’s ladder; Christ is Jacob’s ladder that reacheth up to heaven, and he that refuseth to go by this ladder thither, will scarce by other means get up so high.

There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.  There is none other sacrifice for sin than this; he also, and he only, is the Mediator that reconcileth men to God.  And, sinner, if thou wouldst be saved by him, his benefits are thine; yea, though thou art a great and Jerusalem transgressor.

**Section 142. Jesus Appears to the Disciples, Luke 24:36-43   
J. C. Ryle’s commentary at**

*And as they thus spoke, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and says unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are you troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.*

**We should observe in this passage — the singularly gracious words with which our Lord introduced Himself to His disciples after His resurrection**. We read that He suddenly stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be with you."

This was a wonderful saying, when we consider the men to whom it was addressed. It was addressed to eleven disciples, who three days before had shamefully forsaken their Master and fled. They had broken their promises. They had forgotten their professions of readiness to die for Jesus. They had been scattered, "every man to his own," and left their Master to die alone. One of them had even denied Him three times. All of them had proved backsliders and cowards.

And yet, behold the return which their Master makes to His disciples! Not a word of rebuke is spoken. Not a single sharp saying falls from His lips. Calmly and quietly He appears in the midst of them, and begins by speaking of peace. "Peace be with you!"

We see, in this touching saying, one more proof that the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge." It is His glory to pass over a transgression. He "delights in mercy." He is far more willing to forgive — than men are to be forgiven. He is far more ready to pardon — than men are to be pardoned. There is in His almighty heart — an infinite willingness to put away man's transgressions. Though our sins have been as scarlet — He is ever ready . . .  
to make them as white as snow,   
to blot them out,   
to cast them behind His back,   
to bury them in the depths of the sea,   
and to remember them no more!

All these scriptural phrases are intended to convey the same great truth. The natural man is continually stumbling at them, and refusing to understand them. At this, we need not wonder. Free, full, and undeserved forgiveness to the very uttermost — is not the manner of man. But it is the manner of Christ!

Where is the *lost sinner*, however great his sins — who need be afraid of beginning to apply to such a Savior as this? In the hand of Jesus, there is mercy enough, and to spare. Where is the backslider, however far he may have fallen — who need be afraid of returning? Fury is not in Christ. He is willing to raise and restore the very worst of sinners.

Where is the *saved saint* who ought not to love such a Savior, and to willingly render unto Him a life of holy obedience? There is forgiveness with Him — that He may be feared. (Psalm 130:4.)

Where is the *professing Christian* who ought not to be forgiving toward his brethren? The disciples of a Savior whose words were so full of peace — ought to be peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. (Colossians 3:13.)

**We should observe, for another thing, in this passage — our Lord's marvelous condescension to the infirmity of His disciples**. We read that when His disciples were terrified at His appearance, and could not believe that it was Him — that He said, "Behold my hands and feet — touch me and see."

Our Lord might fairly have commanded His disciples to believe that He had risen. He might justly have said "Where is your faith? Why do you not believe my resurrection, when you see me with your own eyes?" But He does not do so. He stoops even lower than this. He appeals to the bodily senses of the eleven. He bids them to touch Him with their own hands, and satisfy themselves that He was a material being, and not some kind of Spirit.

A mighty principle is contained in this circumstance, which we shall do well to store up in our hearts. Our Lord permits us to use our senses, in testing a fact or an assertion in religion. Things *above* our reason — we must expect to find in Christianity. But things *contrary* to reason, and contradictory to our own senses — our Lord would have us know, we are not meant to believe. A doctrine, so-called, which contradicts our senses, is not a doctrine which came from Him who bade the apostles to touch His hands and His feet.

Let us remember this principle in dealing with the Romish doctrine of a change in the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper. There is no such change at all! Our own eyes and our own tongues tell us that the bread is bread, and the wine is wine — after consecration, as well as before. Our Lord never requires us to believe that which is contrary to our senses. The doctrine of *transubstantiation* is therefore false and unscriptural.

Let us remember this principle in dealing with the Romish doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*. There is no inseparable connection between baptism — and the new birth in man's heart. Our own eyes and senses tell us — that myriads of baptized people have not the Spirit of God, are utterly without grace, and are servants of the devil and the world! Our Lord never requires us to believe that which is contrary to our senses. The doctrine that regeneration invariably accompanies baptism, is therefore undeserving of credit. It is mere antinomianism to say that there is grace — where no grace is to be seen.

A mighty practical lesson is involved in our Lord's dealing with the disciples, which we shall do well to remember. That lesson is the *duty of dealing gently with weak disciples* — and teaching them as they are able to bear. Like our Lord, we must be forbearing and patient. Like our Lord, we must condescend to the feebleness of some men's faith, and treat them as tenderly as little children, in order to bring them into the right way. We must not cast off men, simply because they do not see everything at once. We must not despise the humblest and most childish means — if we can only persuade men to believe.

Such dealing may require much patience. But he who cannot condescend to deal thus with the young, the ignorant, and the uneducated — has not the mind of Christ. Well would it be for all believers, if they would remember Paul's words more frequently, "To the weak, I became weak — that I might gain the weak." (1 Corinthians 9:22.)

**Section 143. Jesus Appears to the Disciples, continued, Luke 24:44-49**

*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high.*

**Let us observe, firstly, in these verses — the gift which our Lord bestowed on His disciples immediately before He left the world.** We read that He "opened their understanding — that they might understand the Scriptures."

We must not misapprehend these words. We are not to suppose that the disciples knew nothing about the Old Testament up to this time, and that the Bible is a book which no ordinary person can expect to comprehend. We are simply to understand that Jesus showed His disciples the *full* meaning of many passages which had hitherto been hidden from their eyes. Above all, He showed the true interpretation of many prophetic passages concerning the Messiah.

We all need a like *enlightenment* of our understandings. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14.) Pride, and prejudice, and love of the world — blind our intellects, and throw a veil over the eyes of our minds, in the reading of the Scriptures. We see the words, but do not thoroughly understand them — until we are taught from above.

He who desires to read his Bible with profit, must first ask the Lord Jesus to open the eyes of his understanding by the Holy Spirit. Human commentaries are useful in their way. The help of good and learned men, is not to be despised. But there is no commentary to be compared with the teaching of Christ. A humble and prayerful spirit, will find a thousand things in the Bible — which the proud, self-conceited student will utterly fail to discern.

**Let us observe secondly in these verses — the remarkable manner in which the Lord Jesus speaks of His own death on the cross**. He does not speak of it as a misfortune, or as a thing to be lamented — but as a *necessity*. He says, "The Messiah *must* suffer, and rise again the third day."

The death of Christ was *necessary* to our salvation. His flesh and blood offered in sacrifice on the cross, were "the life of the world." (John 6:51.) Without the death of Christ — God's law could never have been satisfied — sin could never have been pardoned — man could never have been justified before God — and God could never have shown mercy to man.

The cross of Christ, was the solution of a mighty difficulty. *It untied a vast knot!* It enabled God to be "just — and yet the justifier" of the ungodly. (Romans 3:26.) It enabled man to draw near to God with boldness — and to feel that though he is a sinner, he could be saved. Christ by suffering as a Substitute in our stead, the just for the unjust — has made a way by which we can draw near to God. We may freely acknowledge that in ourselves, we are guilty and deserve eternal death. But we may boldly plead, that One has died for us, and that for His sake, believing on Him — we claim forgiveness and eternal life.

Let us ever glory in the cross of Christ. Let us regard it as the source of all our hopes — and the foundation of all our peace. Ignorance and unbelief may see nothing in the sufferings of Calvary, but the cruel martyrdom of an innocent person. Faith will look far deeper. Faith will see in the death of Jesus, the payment of man's enormous sin-debt to God, and the complete salvation of all who believe.

**Let us observe, thirdly, in these verses — what were the first truths which the Lord Jesus bade His disciples preach after He left the world**. We read that "repentance and forgiveness of sins" were to be preached in His name among all nations.

"Repentance and forgiveness of sins" are the first things which ought to be pressed on the attention of every man, woman, and child throughout the world. All ought to be told *the necessity of repentance*.

All are by nature, desperately wicked. Without repentance and conversion — none can enter the kingdom of God.

All ought to be told God's readiness to forgive every one who believes on Christ. All are by nature guilty and condemned. But anyone may obtain by faith in Jesus — free, full, and immediate pardon.

All, not least, ought to be continually reminded, that *repentance* and *forgiveness* of sins are inseparably linked together. Not that our repentance can purchase our pardon. Pardon is the free gift of God to the believer in Christ. But still it remains true — that an impenitent man, is an unforgiven man.

He who desires to be a true Christian, must be experimentally acquainted with repentance and remission of sins. These are the principal things in saving religion. To belong to a pure Church, and hear the Gospel, and receive the sacraments — are great privileges. But are we converted? Are we justified? If not — -then we are dead before God. Happy is that Christian who keeps these two points continually before his eyes!

Repentance and forgiveness are not mere elementary truths, and milk for spiritual babes. The highest standard of sanctity is nothing more than a continual growth in practical knowledge of these two points. The brightest saint, is the man who has the most heart-searching sense of his own sinfulness, and the liveliest sense of his own complete acceptance in Christ!

**Let us observe, fourthly — what was the first place at which the disciples were to begin preaching**. They were to begin "at Jerusalem."

This is a striking fact, and one full of instruction. It teaches us that none are to be reckoned too wicked for salvation to be offered to them — and that no degree of spiritual disease is beyond the reach of the Gospel remedy. Jerusalem was the wickedest city on earth, when our Lord left the world. It was a city which had stoned the prophets and killed those whom God sent to call it to repentance. It was a city full of pride, unbelief, self-righteousness, and desperate hardness of heart. It was a city which had just crowned all its transgressions — by crucifying the Lord of glory. And yet Jerusalem was the place at which the first proclamation of repentance and pardon was to be made! The command of Christ was plain, "Begin at Jerusalem."

We see in these wondrous words, the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of Christ's compassion toward sinners. We must never despair of anyone being saved — however bad and profligate he may have been. We must open the *door of repentance* to the chief of sinners. We must not be afraid to invite the worst of men to repent, believe, and live.

It is the glory of our Great Physician, that He can heal incurable cases. The things which seem impossible to men — are possible with Christ.

**Let us observe, lastly — the peculiar position which believers, and especially ministers, are meant to occupy in this world**. Our Lord defines it in one expressive word. He says, "You are *witnesses*."

If we are true disciples of Christ — then we must bear a continual testimony in the midst of an evil world. We must testify to the truth of our Master's Gospel — the graciousness of our Master's heart — the happiness of our Master's service — the excellence of our Master's rules of life — and the enormous danger and wickedness of the ways of the world.

Such testimony will doubtless bring the displeasure of man down upon us. The world will hate us, as it did our Master, because we "testify of it — that its works are evil." (John 7:7.) Such testimony will doubtless be believed by few comparatively — and will be thought *offensive* and *extreme* by many. But the duty of a witness is to bear his testimony — whether he is believed or not. If we bear a faithful testimony, we have done our duty — although, like Noah and Elijah, and Jeremiah, we stand almost alone.

What do *we* know of this witnessing character? What kind of testimony do *we* bear? What evidence do we give that we are disciples of a crucified Savior, and, like Him, are "not of the world?" (John 17:14.) What marks do we show of belonging to Him who said, "I came that I should bear witness unto the truth?" (John 18:37.) Happy is he who can give a satisfactory answer to these questions — and whose life declares plainly, that he seeks a better country. (Hebrews 11:14.)

Summary of Wes Seeliger’s Western Theology:

*Excerpted from* The Lamb and The Lion *by* Brennan Manning, 1988, pgs. 23-27,  
at [*http://www.christiangoth.com/western\_theology.htm*](http://www.christiangoth.com/western_theology.htm)(see also *https://www.lifestream.org/frontier-theology-by-wes-seeliger*/)

According to Wes Seeliger in his book *Western Theology*, there are two kinds of people, two visions of life. The first sees life as a possession to be carefully guarded. They are called **Settlers**.  The second sees life as a wild, fantastic gift. They are called **Pioneers**.

These two types give rise to two kinds of theology: Settler Theology and Pioneer Theology. **Settler Theology** is an attempt to answer all the questions, define and housebreak some sort of Supreme Being, establish the status quo on golden tablets in cinemascope. **Pioneer Theology** is an attempt to talk about what it means to receive the strange gift of life. The Wild, Wild West is the setting for both theologies.

In Settler Theology, **the Church** convenes at the Courthouse. It is the center of town life. The old stone structure dominates the town square. Its windows are small, and this makes things dark inside. Within the courthouse walls, records are kept, taxes collected, and trials are held for the bad guys. The courthouse is the symbol of law, order, stability, and most importantly, security.

In Pioneer Theology, **the Church** moves in a Covered Wagon. It’s a house on wheels, always on the move. The Covered Wagon is where the pioneers eat, sleep, fight, love, live and die. It bears the marks of life and movement—it creaks, it’s scarred with arrows and bandaged with bailing wire. The Covered Wagon is where the action is. It moves toward the future, trying not to get bogged down in old ruts. The old Wagon isn’t comfortable, but the pioneers don’t seem to mind. They are more into adventure than comfort.

In Settler Theology, **God** is the Mayor. He is slick and fancy like a dude from back East. His office is on the top floor of the Courthouse. He looks out over the whole town, as his eagle eye ferrets out the smallest details of town life. No one actually sees him or gets close to him. He keeps his blinds drawn. But since there is order in the town, who can deny that he is really there? The Mayor is predictable and always on schedule. The Settlers fear the Mayor, but look to him to clear the payroll and keep things running. Peace and quiet are the Mayor’s main concerns, so he sends the Sheriff to check out any Pioneers who might ride into town.

In Pioneer Theology, **God** is the Trail Boss. He is rough and rugged, full of life. He chews tobacco, drinks straight whiskey. The Trail Boss lives, eats, sleeps, and fights with his people. Their well‑being is his concern. Without him, the Wagon wouldn’t move and living free would be impossible. The Trail Boss will get down in the mud with the Pioneers to help push the Wagon, which often gets stuck. He prods the Pioneers when they get soft and want to turn back. His fist is an expression of his concern.

In Settler Theology, **Jesus** is the Sheriff. He’s the guy who is sent by the Mayor to enforce the rules. He wears a white hat, drinks milk, outdraws the bad guys. The Sheriff decides who gets thrown in jail. There is a saying in town that goes: those who follow the rules and believe that the Sheriff is sent by the Mayor, they won’t stay in Boothill when it comes their time.

In Pioneer Theology, **Jesus** is the Scout. He rides out ahead of the Wagon to find out which way the Pioneers should go. The Scout faces all the dangers of the Trail and suffers every hardship. He is even attacked by the Indians. Through his words and actions he reveals the true intentions of the Trail Boss. By following the Scout, those on the Trail learn what it means to be a true Pioneer.

In Settler Theology, **the Holy Spirit** is the Saloon Girl. Her job is to comfort the Settlers. They come to her when they feel lonely or when life gets dull or dangerous. She tickles them under the chin and makes everything okay again. The Saloon Girls also squeals to the Sheriff whenever someone starts disturbing the peace.

In Pioneer Theology, **the Holy Spirit** is the Buffalo Hunter. He rides along with the Covered Wagon and furnishes fresh meat for the Pioneers. They would die without it (and him). The Buffalo Hunter is a strange character—sort of a wild man. The Pioneers never can tell what he’ll do next. He scares the hell out of the Settlers. He has a big, black gun that goes off like a cannon. He rides into town on Sunday morning to shake up the Settlers. You see, every Sunday morning, the Settlers have a little ice cream party in the Courthouse. With his gun in hand, the Buffalo Hunter sneaks up to one of the Courthouse windows. Then he fires a tremendous blast that rattles the whole Courthouse. Men jump out of their skin, women scream, dogs bark. Chuckling to himself, the Buffalo Hunter rides back to the Wagon Train shooting up the town as he goes.

In Settler Theology, the **Pastor** (the clergyman) is the Banker. Within his vault are locked the values of the town. He is a highly respected man. He has a gun, but keeps it hidden in his desk. He feels that he and the Sheriff have a lot in common. After all, they both protect the Bank.

In Pioneer Theology, the **Pastor** is the Cook! He doesn’t furnish the meat. He just dishes up what the Buffalo Hunter provides. This is how he supports the movement of the wagon. He sees himself as just another Pioneer who has learned to cook. The Cook’s job is to help the Pioneers pioneer.  He doesn’t confuse his job with that of the Trail Boss, the Scout, or the Buffalo Hunter.

In Settler Theology, the **Christian** is the Settler. He fears the open, unknown frontier. His concern is to stay on good terms with the Mayor and keep out of the Sheriff’s Way. “Safety First” is his motto and the Courthouse is his symbol of security, peace, order, and happiness. He keeps his money in the bank. The Banker is his best friend. The Settler never misses an ice cream party.

In Pioneer Theology, **Christians** are Pioneers. They are persons of daring, hungry for new life. They ride hard, and know how to use a gun when necessary. The Pioneer feels sad for the Settlers and tries to tell them of the joy and fulfillment of life on the Trail. They die with their boots on.

In Settler Theology, **Faith** is trusting in the safety of the town; obeying the Law and keeping their noses clean; and believing the Mayor is up there in the Courthouse.

In Pioneer Theology, **Faith** is the spirit of adventure; the readiness to move out; the willingness to risk everything on the Trail. Faith is obedience to the restless voice of the Trail Boss.

In Settler Theology, **Sin** is breaking one of the Town’s ordinances.

In Pioneer Theology, **Sin** is wanting to turn back.

In Settler Theology, **Salvation** lies in living close to home and going to the Courthouse.

In Pioneer Theology, **Salvation** rests in being more afraid of a sterile life in Town, than of death on the Trail. Pioneers find joy in the thought of another day to push on into the unknown Wilderness. They realize their Salvation by trusting the Trail Boss and following his Scout, while living on the meat provided by the Buffalo Hunter.

The Settlers and the Pioneers portray in cowboy-movie language the People of the Law and the People of the Spirit. In the time of the historical Jesus, the guardians of the ecclesiastical setup, the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, had hunkered down in the Courthouse and enslaved themselves to the Law. This not only enhanced their prestige in society, it also gave them a sense of Security. Man fears the responsibility of being free. It is often easier to let others make the decisions or to rely up the letter of the Law. Some men *want* to be slaves.