

## 84. Jesus Opened the Understanding of the Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to follow the example of Jesus and do whatever it takes to help our physical and spiritual children become fully convinced of the resurrection of Jesus. We saw that Jesus gave the disciples witnesses. He appeared to them Himself. He had them handle Him to see that He had flesh and bones. He invited them to put their fingers in the nail holes. He also ate food as they watched. In this topic, we are going to learn about the other things Jesus did so that His disciples would be fully convinced of His resurrection.

We see that the next thing Jesus did was to open the understanding of the disciples so that they understood what the Word of God taught about His resurrection. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Here, we see that Jesus re-explained the very same Scriptures He had explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus earlier that day. Jesus had taught these things to the disciples before the crucifixion.

However, Jesus took several hours that night to go through each of those Old Testament Scriptures again to open the understanding of the disciples. Here, we see that all Christians learn the Word of God in three stages. First, we must receive the knowledge of the Word of God. Second, we will only gain understanding if we are given that understanding by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Third, we are only able to apply what we learn as we are led by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” This is why our preaching only involves one third of the learning process as we help people to gain knowledge of the Word of God.

Since Christ had not yet sent the Holy Spirit, Christ personally opened the understanding of the disciples so they could comprehend the Scriptures. The word translated “comprehend” means *to join together in the mind so as to gain understanding and wisdom*. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Here, the word is translated “are not wise”. Those who depend on human comparison cannot gain spiritual wisdom. That is why we must depend on the Holy Spirit to give us understanding. Ephesians 5:17 says, “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” We will gain that understanding as we look to the Holy Spirit to guide us. That night, the disciples had their understanding opened by Jesus.

Luke 24:46-49 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the 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 to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem

until you are endued with power from on high.” Here, we see that Jesus opened the understanding of the disciples about several things that were taught in the Old Testament.

First, Jesus opened the understanding of the disciples about the things that the Old Testament taught concerning the fact that it was necessary for Him to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day. While talking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:27 says, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Jesus probably taught basically the same things from the Old Testament to all of the disciples that night that He had taught to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Second, Jesus opened their understanding about the fact that the message of repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations. Once Jesus had finished opening the understanding of the disciples about His sufferings and resurrection, Jesus began to open the understanding of the disciples about the message He had for them (that also includes all Christians living today) to take to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The word translated “repentance” means *a change of mind and purpose* and is described in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, where we read, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Repentance is turning from sin and turning to God. The word translated “remission” is also translated “forgiveness”. *It means forgiveness or pardon of sins and remission of the penalty.* Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The blood of Jesus was the price that was paid in order for our sins to be forgiven.

Third, Jesus taught His disciples that they, and we, are to be witnesses of these things. This statement is expanded in Matthew 28:18-20, where we read, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Jesus is the One who has all authority. He gave us the command to make disciples. We are to do that wherever we go. We are to baptize those who repent and believe. Then, we are to teach them all that Jesus commanded so that they become reproducing Christians.

Fourth, Jesus taught that He would send “the Promise of My Father” (the Holy Spirit) upon all Christians. However, for the disciples gathered that night, Jesus made it clear that they were to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. The word translated “endued” means *to be clothed or to put on.* Acts 2:1-3 says, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.” The Lord placed the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers that day, and they witnessed with great boldness. Now, each Christian receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. It is as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit, instead of our own strength, that we will be able to witness with boldness.

Luke concluded the book by talking about the return of Jesus to heaven forty days after the resurrection. Luke 24:50-53 says, “And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” However, Luke then began the book of Acts by telling what Jesus did after His resurrection and before He returned to heaven. Acts 1:1-3 says, “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Here, we see that Jesus was seen by the disciples at various times for forty days after the resurrection. The word translated “infallible proofs” means *evidence that cannot be disputed*.

At the conclusion of those forty days, we see that Jesus went with the disciples to the town of Bethany. Bethany was the hometown of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. It was about two miles from the city of Jerusalem. When they were close to the town of Bethany, Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples. Then, He spoke His final words before returning to heaven. Acts 1:8 says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In those final words, Jesus reminded the disciples of the work He gave to every Christian from that time until He returns to take us to heaven. We are to be witnesses to Jesus. Then, Jesus was parted from the disciples and carried up into heaven.

We also see the response of the disciples when Jesus was taken to heaven. We see that the disciples worshiped Jesus. This refers to a formal act of worship. The disciples expressed their thanks and worship to God for sending His Son to pay the penalty for their sin. Jesus had spent enough time with the disciples over those forty days that they had come to a full understanding of what the death and resurrection of Jesus meant to each one of them in their individual lives. All of the doubts the disciples had when they heard that Jesus had risen from the dead had been taken away. 1 John 1:1-2 says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” The disciples were filled with great joy and they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children experience that same joy in their lives as we show them, by our attitude, that we really understand that Jesus is alive and that He is now in the presence of the Father interceding for us. May the Lord richly bless you as you rejoice in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.