# BaptistWay: Questions about the promised Messiah

February 7, 2014
• *The BaptistWay lesson for Feb. 23 focuses on Luke 24:13-35.*

**The walk**

Our Methodist brothers and sisters have a retreat format they call "The Walk to Emmaus." It is patterned after the biblical encounter of two disciples who unknowingly come in contact with the resurrected Jesus. I've never been on a "walk," as they refer to it, but I have a close friend who thinks highly of the experience. Recently, his wife went on a walk, and my wife was asked to write her a letter to be opened up on a specific day to express to her how God had used her in her life in the past and how she hoped God would work in her life through her walk.

Our Methodist friends rightly understand the main idea of this passage—experiencing the reality of Christ's resurrection. Since we know the story, we often fail to allow ourselves to enter into the experience of these two disciples and fail to recognize the change the resurrection has the potential to bring about in our lives.

Luke presents the disciples' walk as a divinely appointed event. Jesus appears in their midst right as they happen to be discussing "everything that had happened" (v. 14). There was indeed a lot to talk about. When asked about what they were discussing Cleopas lists a number of things: 1) the actions of Jesus; 2) the actions of his accusers; 3) their failed hopes; and 4) the empty tomb. Luke likely tells this story to inform us about Jesus more than to teach any kind of lesson implicit in the event. When reading his Gospel for the first time, a reader likely is wondering about some of these very things, even though he or she already would be informed about

the resurrection.

**The explanation**

There are many things about God and his plan left open in Scripture. The identity of Jesus and his mission are not among them. Luke ties this information up neatly to help his readers avoid the questions the disciples on the road struggled with.

It's important to note in Jesus' explanation that the disciples are not called foolish because they failed to recognize him. They purposely were kept from recognizing Jesus. Rather, it is because they failed to believe what already had been revealed to them through the prophets (v. 25), not to mention all that Jesus had spoken to them about his impending death and resurrection.

Perhaps the reason the disciples were kept from seeing Jesus was so those who read the story today and never have seen Jesus can receive assurance from Jesus himself the gospel is valid and true.

**The realization**

Although it is presented in one whole instant, we are shown the realization of Jesus' identity by the disciples is a process. After Jesus' explanation, the disciples did not want him to leave them (v. 29). If pressed, they might not have even been able to articulate why, but they knew they wanted him to stay.

I think this is a model of the way we grow in our understanding of Jesus today. In Baptist life, it is common to hear of rededications to Jesus. I'm not sure that in every instance the person that felt the need to do this lost his or her dedication to Christ. More likely, the understanding of what it meant to be dedicated to Christ was what had changed. Perhaps we would do well to borrow this emphasis on experiencing Christ's resurrection the

Methodists have adopted and encourage our members to consider it both before and after they have professed faith in Christ.

The “light-bulb moment” came for the disciples when he broke bread with them (vv. 30-31). This episode is rich in imagery and meaning. Perhaps God allowed them to recognize Jesus at this point because the memory jogged their minds back to Jesus’ words at the Last Supper. When read as a whole, this episode shows us Jesus cannot be fully understood apart from his death memorialized through his last meal with the disciples.

**The response**

The disciple’s believing (v. 33) response is the obvious climax of the passage. Luke begins documenting the empty tomb in the same way the other Gospels do: beginning with a visit from a few faithful women. Luke tells us these women not only discovered an empty tomb, but heard, believed and told the news about Jesus’ resurrection to the rest of the disciples. “But they did not believe the women because their words seemed like nonsense” (v. 11). At least Peter is prompted to investigate the situation on his own and goes away “wondering to himself what had happened” (v. 12).

God used all of these events to engage the two disciples walking along the Emmaus road in a process that resulted in their salvation. Although we often share the gospel as if it is something that converts people at a singular point in time, often a process leads up to the decision to follow Christ, as well as the understanding of what this means throughout life. Where are you in this process? How can you help others to become closer to seeing, believing and living the truth about Jesus?