

## THE WALK TO EMMAUS

*Luke 24:13-53*

The teacher will simply need to review briefly the story of the last week of the Lord's life and the Easter story, as an introduction to this lesson.

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### Doctrinal Points

*The heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem open the Scriptures for all mankind.*

*If our hearts are fixed on worldly things, we will be unable to see the truth.*

*We must study and believe the Scriptures as preparation for receiving and understanding the heavenly doctrines.*

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### Notes for Parents

The Gospel of Luke does not tell us that the women who went to the sepulcher on the first Easter morning saw the risen Lord, but we learn from the other Gospels that Mary Magdalene was actually the first to see Him. The men who had followed Him—because they were preoccupied with their own blighted hopes—could not immediately see Him. The story of how He gradually made His presence known to them is told in our lesson for today.

We are all very much like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. We have the Scriptures. We ought to know what was prophesied about the Lord, and we ought to believe His promises. But we are likely to be so absorbed in what is happening to us right now that we do not look either back or forward. The Lord said to the two: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Are we not all too often “slow of heart to believe”? Our hearts are fixed on the things of this world.

The Lord did a wonderful thing for the two disciples and later for all the apostles. He “opened unto them the Scriptures.” We all

know how many different ideas people have of the Bible and that quite opposite teachings are drawn from it by various groups. This is because people do not pay attention to this teaching of the Lord that the Word needs to be “opened” if we are to understand it, and that in reality it teaches throughout of Him—not of the history of the Jews and other external happenings. If we insist on thinking that the literal sense of the Bible is all there is to it, we shall never know what it really means, for the letter of the Bible is full of apparent contradictions. Some sects, for example, just take certain statements which they want to believe and ignore the statements which contradict their chosen beliefs. Paul recognized this when he wrote, “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” (II Corinthians 3:6)

We all know what parables are—we have studied some of them. We can see that there is a deeper meaning within a parable. In our lesson for today the Lord teaches us plainly that the Old Testament as a whole—Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms—is a parable, with a deeper meaning which is about Himself.

The post-resurrection appearances of the Lord, and His ascension, which took place at Bethany forty days after the resurrection, taught the apostles two things: that He was always near them, whether they could see Him or not, and that He was God Himself. In that belief they went forth and founded the Christian Church.

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### Primary

Begin with the Easter story very briefly, then read the lesson from the Word, and then tell briefly the events of the rest of the chapter so that the children will know of the Ascension. Stress the Lord’s presence with us even though we do not see Him. Point out the opening of the Word and make the connection with the Second Coming.

What did we celebrate on Easter Sunday?

Who were the first to learn that the Lord had risen?

What did the apostles think of the women’s story?

When did the events of our lesson for today take place?

Where were the two disciples going?

Emmaus was a little over six miles from Jerusalem.

What were the two disciples talking about?

Who came and walked with them?

Why did they not recognize Him?

When they told Him why they were sad, what did He say?

How did He explain these things to them?

What were they doing when they finally recognized Him?

When the Lord vanished from their sight, the two disciples went right back to Jerusalem and told the apostles about the wonderful thing that had happened to them, and while they were talking about it, suddenly there was the Lord again standing in the midst of them, and this time they all saw Him and talked with Him.

They were afraid because they thought He was a ghost.

But He proved to them that it was He Himself.

He showed them, as He had showed the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, the inner meaning of the Scriptures, and how the books of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms taught about Him.

The Lord was seen from time to time by different people during the following month. Finally one day, when the Lord had gone out with the disciples to Bethany, the little village where Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived, they saw Him ascend into heaven. So then they were sure of two things, one that the Lord really was, as He had told them, God Himself come into the world, and the other that, even when they could not see Him, they could know that He was always close to them. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that one of the last things He said to them was, “Lo, I am with you always.” We can know both of these things, too, and we should think of them often. Hundreds of years later the Lord opened the understanding of Emanuel Swedenborg to see these same things in the Word and had him write them down, so that now we may all know them if we want to.

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### Junior

With this class much should be done with the importance of this chapter to the New Church. Show the children what a privilege we have in being able to

learn the very things the Lord told the disciples about the real meaning of the Word and even much more than He could tell them.

What event did we celebrate on Easter Sunday?

Who were the first to learn of the Lord's resurrection?

Why had the women come to the sepulcher?

What did they find?

Who told them the Lord had risen?

What did the apostles think of the women's story?

The two disciples of our story for today were not apostles, but they had evidently been devoted followers of the Lord. They were talking of all that had happened and they were sad, even though they had heard about the women's report. They could not really believe what they had been told. That was why, when the Lord came and walked beside them, "their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Before they could believe, He had to remind them of all that the prophets had said would happen to Him and show them that His resurrection was just what they should have expected, and He also had to show them some of the deeper meaning of the Scriptures.

By the time they reached Emmaus, which was over six miles from Jerusalem (a furlong is a little over six hundred feet), they were ready to believe, and so the Lord could open their eyes to recognize Him as they were eating together. This story means a great deal to New Church people, because in it the Lord Himself tells us that there is a deeper meaning behind the literal story of the Old Testament, a meaning which tells about Him. He opened the understanding of the two disciples and later of all the apostles to see this meaning. The disciples were simple men. Their hearts burned within them while He opened the Scriptures to them, but afterward they did not remember or write down what He told them. People of that time were not ready for this deeper knowledge.

But hundreds of years later, after men's minds had outgrown the simple ideas of those early times, the Lord again opened the understanding of a man to see the deeper meaning of the Scriptures, and this time He commanded the man to write down what

he had learned so that all who wished could study the Word in its inner meaning. This man was Emanuel Swedenborg. The opening of the Word in this way for all mankind was the promised Second Coming of the Lord.

What did the two disciples do as soon as the Lord left them?

When did the Lord first appear to the eleven apostles?

What did they think at first?

How did He reassure them?

What final event took place at Bethany?

We learn in Acts 1:3 that the ascension did not take place until forty days after the resurrection, and the other Gospels tell us of some of the Lord's other appearances.

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### Intermediate

From this lesson the Intermediates should get at least the thought that the Lord is always present with us and that it is very important for us to study the Word and believe it—to want to know what the Lord is saying to us. The Scriptural proof of the existence of the internal sense of the Word should be stressed.

When the women reported to the apostles that they had been told that the Lord had risen, the apostles did not believe them. And even after Peter himself had been to the tomb and found that the body of the Lord was really gone, the disciples were still only puzzled. They still thought of death as the end of everything.

So in our lesson we find the two disciples on the way to Emmaus talking over the events of the day but still sad—without any real belief. This was why, when the Lord came and walked beside them, “their eyes were holden that they should not know him.” And when they told Him why they were sad, He said: “O fools, and *slow of heart to believe* all that the prophets have spoken.” He was pointing out that if they had chosen to believe the prophets instead of just what their own eyes had seen, they would not have been discouraged by the crucifixion.

Then the Lord began to remind them of what the Scriptures prophesied concerning the Messiah and also to explain to them

some of the things which the Scriptures taught of Him. That it was the inner meaning which He gave them we know, because they said, “he opened to us the scriptures.” And later in our chapter we read that He did the same for the apostles when He appeared to them all. From our lessons on the book of Psalms you will remember that one of the important things we learn from this chapter in Luke is that the Psalms are a part of the fully inspired Word, although the ancient Jewish canon did not recognize them as such.

From this chapter in Luke as well as from the traditions they received from the apostles the people of the early Christian Church knew that the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms had an inner meaning, and during the first few centuries of the church many efforts were made to discover or to work out such a meaning. But the Lord knew that man was not ready to use the knowledge of the inner meaning properly and so He had not given the apostles any specific principles by which it could be obtained. The attempts of the early Christian “fathers” resulted in some fantastic explanations which turned many people against what they called “allegorizing.” In John 16:12 we read that one of the things the Lord said in His long talk with the apostles at the last supper was, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” It was to be many hundreds of years before the world reached the point in its development when the Lord could open the inner meaning of the Word in such a way that everyone who wished might have access to it. We know now that this opening of the Word was what was meant by His promised Second Coming, and that it was accomplished in the middle of the eighteenth century, when Emanuel Swedenborg was chosen and prepared by the Lord to receive and write down for us the basic principles by which the Word may be understood.

The four Gospels give us four different accounts of the appearances of the Lord after His resurrection. The account in John is the fullest. From our chapter for today we might think that the ascension took place almost immediately after the resurrection, but we must remember that in all the accounts of the Lord’s life

lapses of time between one event and another are often unnoted. From the book of Acts (1:3) we learn that the Lord was seen on earth for forty days after the resurrection. In that book also (1:1-14) Luke gives us a fuller account of the ascension than he was inspired to give in his Gospel. But it is in the Gospel that we learn that the ascension took place at Bethany, which you remember was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

We should note something else which we learn from our chapter. The Lord satisfied His apostles that He was not merely a ghost by showing them His hands and His feet, telling them to “handle” Him, and eating food in their presence, and He said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.” When we die, we leave behind us with our physical bodies our ability to see and hear the things which go on in this outer world. The bodies we have in the other world are made of spiritual substance. But the Lord, we are told by Swedenborg, made even the “ultimates” which He took on by birth in this world divine, so that He continues always to be in direct touch with this world. And yet we must not think that the Lord appeared after the resurrection in the finite physical body which He received through Mary, for that was a human, not a divine body. If He had risen in that body, the two disciples on the way to Emmaus would have known Him immediately, and also He could not have appeared and disappeared at will as He did. The best way for us to think of the Lord when we pray to Him and when we are trying to understand His teaching is as He appeared to John in Revelation 1:12-16. This gives us the thought of Him as a person and yet as one very different from any mere finite human being.

We have not tried to take up the correspondences in this chapter because the general lessons give us so much to think about. But we might notice that the Lord made Himself known to the two disciples in the breaking of bread, which is a picture of conjunction by means of good, and that the food which the apostles gave Him was broiled fish and honeycomb, the broiled fish representing their natural knowledges made serviceable through love and the honey-

comb natural delights. Swedenborg tells us that here the broiled fish and honeycomb mean the letter of the Word and its pleasantness. This was what the Lord was able to share with His apostles.

*Basic Correspondences*

breaking bread	=	conjunction by means of good
broiled fish	=	natural knowledges made useful by love
honeycomb	=	natural delights
the broiled fish and honeycomb together	=	the letter of the Word and its pleasantness

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**Senior**

The lesson should center in the nature and purpose of the Lord's post-resurrection appearances and the importance of this chapter for the New Church. Finish with emphasis on the need of constant study of the Word and of the writings.

The Gospels give us four different accounts of the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord. It is interesting to sit down and read them one after another—in the last chapter of each Gospel—and even to list the facts mentioned. We notice that the Lord appeared and disappeared. Sometimes, as in our chapter in Luke, He was not at first recognized. Yet He was able to show Thomas the prints of the nails in His hands and the wound in His side, and at least twice He appeared to eat food with His disciples. And the physical body which had been placed in the tomb disappeared, although the linen cloths in which it had been wrapped were left. All this adds up to what the Lord says in our chapter: “A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.” He rose differently from the way in which we rise after death. When we leave our physical bodies behind us, we leave with them all conscious contact with the outer life of the natural world. But the Lord, as Swedenborg tells us, had in the gradual process of glorification made even the “ultimates” divine, and so lives with us always, even in our outward lives in the world.



In the two appearances which are described in our chapter His purpose was to impress upon the apostles—and upon us—the importance of studying and believing the Scriptures, and also to give the assurance that within the letter of Scripture is divine truth. He “opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.” There is no record of what He told them at that time, but the glimpse they had added depth to their later preaching. We have infinitely more than they had, for in these latter days the Lord has come again and not only opened the Word to the understanding of Swedenborg but caused, through him, the publication of the basic principles of its interpretation together with sufficient examples so that all who wish to make the effort may study it with assurance. We should all ask ourselves how far we are taking advantage of this wonderful thing which the Lord has done for mankind. Do our hearts “burn within us” as we read the Word in the light of the Second Coming?

The Lord said through Isaiah, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” The Lord speaks to us today through His Word and opens our understanding by means of the writings of Swedenborg. If we really love Him and want to be taught by Him, we can see Him rise from the sepulcher and walk with us by the way. When we doubt and fear, He says to us, as He said to the disciples: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,” and “Why are ye troubled?”

The Lord, forty days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3), ascended to heaven in the sight of His disciples. He ascends for us when we see that He is our Father in heaven as well as our savior, the only God of heaven and earth, from whom alone truth and goodness flow.

And He says to us, as He said to the apostles, “Ye are witnesses of these things,” and promises to be with us always if we will tarry in Jerusalem until we have been endued with power from on high. To tarry in Jerusalem is to study faithfully the Word and the doctrines until we are so sure they come from God that we can give them to others without letting ourselves get into the picture.

In preparing for our occupations in the world, we know that we need to learn all we can in order to be effective. We should realize that this is equally true of our occupation as “witnesses” for the Lord. It is not our ideas but the Lord’s truth in which is the power to enlighten and to save men.

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### Adult

Possible discussion topics are the nature of the Lord’s post-resurrection body, the opening of the Scriptures, and the charge to “tarry in Jerusalem.” This charge and the promise of the Holy Spirit were literally fulfilled for the apostles. They should be spiritually fulfilled for us.

Our lesson today is a portion of the Gospel of Luke which we all need to study and make part of our equipment as New Churchmen, as well as to ponder for its personal meaning for us. There have been differences of opinion in the church as to the nature of the Lord’s post-resurrection body, and our chapter puts this problem squarely before us. The body was gone from the tomb, but the linen cloths in which it had been wrapped were left. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus walked and talked with the Lord for some time without recognizing Him. As soon as they did recognize Him in the breaking of bread, He vanished from their sight. He appeared suddenly standing in the midst of the apostles. The body in which the Lord appeared after the resurrection was obviously not the finite physical body which He had worn before the crucifixion. Yet it was more than the spiritual body in which each of us lives after death. He told the apostles to handle Him, and said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” And He also ate in their presence. Swedenborg tells us that the Lord, by the process of glorification, made the very “ultimates” divine and so rose with the whole body. But the divine body is necessarily infinite, and matter is finite. There we have our problem—a challenging one—about which we may and do come to different conclusions in this world. But without solving it we may be sure that the facts by which it is presented are all true, and these facts give

us the assurance that the Lord is present in the world actually, as He says in Matthew: “Lo, I am with you always.” By His life in the world He not only overcame the hells, but He established a direct, permanent, personal contact with men on earth which He had not had before.

The two on the way to Emmaus did not at first recognize the Lord, but as He explained the Scriptures to them, their hearts burned within them, and later they knew Him in breaking of bread. The fact that they urged Him to abide with them pictures their desire to preserve the truth which they were receiving, and their sitting and eating with Him their desire to apply it to life, and thus they received good from Him and so recognized Him. Swedenborg tells us that to break bread and give it to the disciples signifies “to instruct in the good and truth of faith, by which the Lord appears” (AC 9412).

The New Church accepts this story and the incidents which follow as the Lord’s own testimony to the fact that the Word has an internal meaning, and that the whole of the Word of the Old Testament treats inmost of Him. He said that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and now we are told that, “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,” and later: “These are the words which I spake 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.” We think what a wonderful privilege it must have been to hear the Lord Himself expound the Scriptures; but today we have that same privilege, if we will make the preparation necessary to enjoy it, for the Lord in His Second Coming has opened the Scriptures so that all who will may understand them.

In Acts 1:3 we are told that forty days elapsed between the resurrection and the ascension. The Gospel of John records several appearances of the Lord not mentioned in the other Gospels. The instruction given the disciples during these days was of a more

interior character than before and was designed to strengthen them for their mission. Then the Lord led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them and carried up to heaven. The faith of His disciples had now reached a point where His visible presence was no longer necessary to them. Indeed, He did not want them to depend upon His visible presence. He tells Thomas, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” And John adds, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:29-31) The Lord must ascend in our minds. We must not cling to the thought of His earthly life as something that happened long ago, to the thought of His infancy, childhood, miracles, and suffering on the cross as the reason for our loyalty to Him. These all have their place in preparing us for His service, and in the internal sense they describe the stages through which our concept of the Lord must pass if we make orderly progress in the Christian life. But our thought of the Lord should rise above the merely natural phenomena of His life and center in His glorified human, of which we have a correspondential picture in the first chapter of Revelation. The Lord is not only our personal friend and savior; He is our heavenly king. As Isaiah tells us (Isaiah 9:6): “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” The Bible story does not leave the Lord hanging on the cross. It goes on through the resurrection to the ascension. The Christian thought and the Christian appeal should never leave the Lord on the cross. We should not give the Lord pity; we should give Him worship.

The last promise of the Lord to His apostles was the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were told to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. Jerusalem represents doctrine. We must all tarry in the study and practice of doctrine until the Lord’s power can come to us through it. Divine love works always in accordance with divine wisdom. We can do

no more good than we know how to do. If we go forth with our own ideas, merely using such passages from the Word and from the writings as we think support what we have decided to believe, we may do more harm than good. The truth is not always what we wish to believe, and we do not arrive at the truth by our own observation and reasoning. We too may go forth “in the power of the Spirit,” but the spirit comes to us only through the Word, and in this new age through the Word as opened for us with the help of the writings. Some scholars today try to change the Word or discount certain passages in it so that it will mean what they think it ought to mean. And the same destructive method may be used with regard to the writings of Swedenborg. But we should see clearly that these attempts spring from the pride of self-intelligence and are falsifications of the truth.

We may read in Acts 2 of the literal fulfillment of the promise to the apostles made in our chapter. The crown of Christian discipleship is the ability to bring the Lord’s truth to others, to bring others to the recognition of the Lord and to acquaintance with the means of learning of Him. To have this power we must put self aside. Our hearts and minds must be “continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

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#### From the Writings of Swedenborg

*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 5620<sup>14</sup>: “The ‘honeycomb and broiled fish’ that the Lord ate with the disciples after His resurrection, also signified the external sense of the Word (the ‘fish’ as to its truth and the ‘honeycomb’ as to its pleasantness) . . . It appears as if such things were not signified, because their having a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb seems as if fortuitous; nevertheless it was of providence, and not only this, but also all other, even the least, of the things that occur in the Word. As such things were signified, therefore the Lord said of the Word that in it were written the things concerning Himself. Yet the things written of the Lord in the literal sense of the Old Testament are few; but those in its internal sense are all so written, for from this is the holiness of the Word. This is what is meant by His saying that ‘all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Him.’”

### Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What happened on the first Easter Sunday? *Jesus rose from death*
- P. Who first learned of the Lord's resurrection? *the women*
- J. What did the apostles think of the women's story? *idle tales*
- P. What were the two disciples talking about later the same day on the way to Emmaus? *all that had happened*
- P. Who came and walked with them? *Jesus*
- J. Why did they not recognize Him? *their eyes were "held"*
- J. What did He say when they told Him why they were sad? *"ought not Christ . . . ?"*
- J. What did He teach them? *about Himself in the Scriptures*
- P. What happened as they were eating together? *they recognized Him; He vanished*
- P. How did they say they felt when the Lord was talking to them? *heart burned within*
- P. What happened later as they told their story to the apostles? *Jesus appeared*
- J. What did the apostles think? *He was a ghost*
- J. How did the Lord reassure them? *let them touch Him; ate some food*
- J. What did He eat? *fish, honey*
- J. What did He then teach them? *inner meaning of Scriptures*
- J. What did He tell them to do? *wait in Jerusalem for power*
- J. What promise did He make to them? *I am with you always*
- P. How was the Lord finally separated from them? *ascended into heaven*
- P. Where did the ascension take place? *Bethany*
- I. What does "breaking bread" represent? *sharing in love*
- S. How can we now know many of the things in the Word which the Lord revealed to the disciples? *the heavenly doctrines*
- S. How did the Lord's post-resurrection body differ from the one He took on from Mary? *glorified, divine substantial*