

# Bible Study with Jesus

## Luke 24:36b-48

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Bring to mind a time you *fell deeply in love*...

Does that stir happy thoughts? Bring warm smiles? It looks like it!

Well, I have a confession to make. While I was at the Seminary, studying to be a pastor, *I fell head-over-heals in love too!* No, it wasn't with Judy — we'd already been married 14 years by then. And it wasn't falling in love with our baby daughter — she was still five years away. No, I fell deeply in love with *the Bible* — that seminal book of ancient writing on which our Christian faith is based.

Oh, I'd been a Christian all my life, had gone to church with my parents, been educated at Lutheran schools, and had devotion every day including after I left home. I was incredibly blessed with a sure and well-grounded faith, nurtured by all those wonderful elements of home and church — including here at St Paul's. But it was the *Seminary* that really got me *into the Bible itself*, and with it, the *heartbeat of the Lord*. It was like the difference between speaking to someone on the phone and dancing with them cheek to cheek!

This is what the disciples experienced that first Easter evening when our risen Lord not only appeared to them, but also opened their minds so that they totally saw for the first time that all those Bible stories they knew, all those sermons they'd heard, their whole identity and life as God's people the Jews — all of this was now personally standing before them, opening them to a magnificent reality they'd previously missed. Jesus was not just their master and mentor now, but the Author of all creation, reaching out to them all along from the holy scriptures.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have been in that room that night as Jesus led the disciples in Bible study, showing how all that had happened to him was in God's mind from the very beginning, and that he himself was God the Lord, come in person to renew the world! Our text says:

Jesus 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.

Oh to have been in Jesus' Bible study that night! What passages did he read? What did he say about them? What did he teach?

Well, we actually do know, and we can join in!

For a start, we have a summary of what he taught, here in the text:

'This is what is written', he told them: 'The Christ will suffer, and will 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'.

Three things here, three topics in Jesus' Bible study:

- One, his suffering and death on the cross — God's strange yet effective way of winning forgiveness for the world;

- Two, his resurrection from the dead — that unparalleled miracle by which God ushers in a completely new creation; and
- Three, the world-wide preaching of forgiveness and new life from God in Jesus' name, the mission of the church.

This is the content of Jesus' Bible study, taught not from the New Testament — that hadn't been written yet — but from the Old Testament, the holy scriptures of the Jews.

So we can expect that in his Bible study Jesus showed how he himself matches the prophetic texts about a coming Messiah — texts like Micah 5:

But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

We can expect Jesus showed them his divine authority from Deuteronomy 18:

God the Lord said to Moses, 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command.'

We can expect that Jesus explained his horrific death with suffering-servant texts like Isaiah 52:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

And we can certainly expect that Jesus used Isaiah 53 to describe his great resurrection victory:

After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life, and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong.

And how could he not have used the magnificent confession of Job (19:25):

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth!

All this and more is what Jesus taught that Easter-evening Bible study, and after that too, in the days before his ascension. How do we know this? How can we be so sure?

Answer: Because the disciples passed on what they learnt. They taught and preached what Jesus taught them, as St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.

As time went by it was all written down for us in the Gospels, in the letters and in the histories collected together as the New Testament — which is why the Bible is so authoritative for us — why we say after it's read, "This is the word of the Lord; Thanks be to God."

But that's only if we do, in fact, attend to the scriptures.

Thomas wasn't there that night and so missed out on Jesus' Bible study and did not believe — did not fall in love with Jesus and his word that evening. We will miss out too if we do not attend to the reading and preaching of God's word, and if we do not take it up in serious Bible study.

But when we do, then our risen Lord is present and teaching us himself. And it's then that, by his grace, the Lord opens our minds to the scriptures too, and moves our hearts to believe, and yes, to fall in love!

The disciples' lives were absolutely turned around because of Jesus' Bible study. In a matter of days they were transformed from locked-up cowards to bold preachers of the gospel; from self-focused victims of an oppressive culture to grace-filled pioneers of a new community, indeed citizens of a new world.

We too need this transformation, and more than ever before because the social structures around us no longer support the faith the way they did when I was a kid. Thick in the air we breath is outright attack on Christian belief through a growing set of humanist assumptions and assertions we're expected to accept without dispute. Assertions like: Faith is a private matter, not to be taken outside the front door — except, of course, the faith-assertions of secularism which are now expected to be upheld in every government policy, workplace, and social interaction, as rugby player Israel Folau is finding out.

Assertions like: There is no absolute truth; everyone makes that up for themselves — except that everyone is expected to accept the values being thrust on us by our social engineers.

Jordan Peterson, a secular psychologist currently making a big splash because he's calling out these duplicities, these deceptions, bemoans the mess we're making of young people with this patently false teaching, and with the deliberate trashing of the truth, learning and wisdom of the past embedded in the world's great literature, including the Bible.

A truly open mind is one liberated by the word of God, not enslaved to contemporary or any other kind of ideology.

Of course, it's not just truth and wisdom we find in the Bible, but the Author of life himself, with his deep, long-suffering and self-sacrificing love for his wonderful but tragically fallen creation, and then what he is doing about it.

So Bible study, dear brothers and sisters — to meet the risen Lord and fall in love with him.

To say this another way, I'm going to finish with a video clip from a wonderful crowd-funded enterprise called The Bible Project. In the last few years a biblical theologian, Tim Mackie, and a film-maker, Jon Collins, have come together to provide on-line resources for Bible study. They've got over 100 video clips on their website — clips on the structure and message of each book of the Bible; clips on key biblical themes and topics, like Holiness; Bible study guides and other materials, with video clips drawing literary structure charts for each book of the Bible; and an excellent App for self-directed reading through the Bible, linked to the video clips. See <https://theBibleproject.com>.

So let's end now with this clip on The Public Reading of Scripture — really about listening to the word of the Lord together, both in corporate worship and at home in devotion, but also in deliberate Bible study... [see clip from <https://theBibleproject.com/explore/public-reading-scripture/> ]

And the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus our risen Lord. Amen.