
Its Christological Mission and Message

Luke 24:13-53

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Introduction In the novel *Brass Justice*, the central character is standing in a house overlooking the ocean. There is a deep bay where the waves come in at an angle. They comment on the fact that as the waves come in, they strike one side of the bay reflecting the energy under the surface creating powerful riptides on the opposite side of the bay. These powerful forces can carry swimmers far out into the ocean. This is like the mission that God has put the church on. Underneath the ordinary surface of ministry, God's powerful force is moving the church to launch into the current of His kingdom mission.

When the marines go into battle, they are sent on a mission. That mission will have objectives, rules-of-engagement and resources. For the marine carrying out the mission, he just knows what he has been trained to do and what he must do to accomplish the mission. Getting it done is the most important thing in his mind.

Our Initiatives

Over the last 6 months, we have working to clarify our understanding of the Biblical framework and focus in evangelism. As Pastor Dan has developed our evangelism, we see the need to for several initiatives:

To enhance our Mission Statement so that it reads:

By God's Grace and through His Word
we will cultivate in the hearts of God's people
a passion for the supremacy
of the Lord Jesus Christ
magnified in love for Him
manifested in love for one another
and *multiplied by love for the lost.*

To highlight our place in the redemptive mission of the church as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission;

To develop evangelistic strategies that involve the whole church in the kingdom mission of preaching the gospel.

Our Term

When the Lord gathered His disciples just before His ascension, He gave them what is known to Christians as the great commission. Consider Matthew 28:19-20.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

- A King in His Authority
- Subjects both doubting and worshipping
- A Kingdom work of discipling the nations.
- This mission has two distinct phases or objectives:
 - To evangelize so that people come to be baptized
 - To edify so that people come to be obedient

This kingdom mission, which was launched in eternity past, has been growing in clarity and force all through redemptive history. At the center of it is Christ and the cross. The thrust of it is to call out a people who will believe and bow to the King and bring Him glory forever.

Many have coined terms to represent this great outward flow of people from the church to the lost among our neighborhoods and the nations. We are choosing to coin a new term for being the kind of church that is taught and thrust out to carry out this kingdom mission. Therefore, we see the church as a ***Commissional Community***. We are engaged in the continuing mission even today. How do we know that? By studying the book of Acts. That is what we are going to do this whole month of January - to study the Scriptures from the book of Acts.

Our Series

This series on **the church as a commissional community** follows the literary markers that form the structure for the book of Acts. Acts is a series of 6 panels that are marked off by 5 summary statements (with Acts 28:31 as a summary of the summaries); these summary statements themselves are repeated at various points within the books as well. If we follow the literary markers in Acts, two things stand out: the increase of the Word and the increase of the church. Both of these are intertwined with each other in Christ expanding His kingdom from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The goal of this series is to preach the redemptive historical flow of Acts as it rises from the text so that you will **see** yourself in the powerful movement of God's redemptive mission.

Our Aim

It is our aim and fervent desire that see ourselves ***becoming a commissional church***.

A Road

(v.13-27)

We open with a road, representing the Old Covenant where *their eyes were closed* to see Jesus so ignorance, slow hearts and mis-reading of the Scriptures lead to a failure to see Jesus as the Messiah and the Kingdom mission.

Their Sadness

(v.13-18)

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

On the morning of the resurrection, two followers are sadly trudging along the road on the way home from Jerusalem. One is identified as Cleopas who in John 19:25 is Jesus' uncle. It is only reasonable to assume that the second is Cleopas' wife, Mary.¹ They are deeply discouraged, discussing the sad and surprising events of the prior week. As they walk along, they are joined by another man. He reaches out and stops them, his brow furrowed. He inquires as to what they are talking about. They are astonished that he does not know the momentous events that have just transpired.

They do not recognize Jesus as He walks and talks with them. Why? Their eyes are not opened so that they can recognize Him. This is the central feature of the Old Covenant – they have the truth right before their eyes but they cannot recognize Him. The physical reality here is meant show us the spiritual reality in the next paragraph.

Their Story

(v.19-24)

¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

So they tell him their story. They had followed this man, Jesus who had done mighty deeds and spoken amazing truths. They had hoped that he would be the one to redeem Israel. Now their hopes were Old Covenant hopes. Their understanding of redemption had not moved beyond the physical type of redemption from Egypt. They had hoped Jesus would redeem them from Rome. But he had been crucified and their hopes were dashed.

Do you see the irony? It is now the third day since his death and unbelievably some women who visited the tomb told us that the body was not there. These women reported seeing angels who told them Jesus was alive. So their eyes are still not opened to understand who Jesus is even though they had the Scriptures

and the eye-witness reports of the resurrection. Just like the women, “Him they did not see.” (V.24)

The Scriptures

(v.25-27)

²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Their not understanding the Scriptures they have is a chargeable offense. They are foolish and slow of heart. They were slow to believe what the prophets had actually spoken. They have not read Isaiah 52–53 or Psalm 16 with understanding, neither Deuteronomy 18:15, Psalm 2:7, Psalm 110:1, Psalm 118 nor Daniel 7:13–14. In other words, they were responsible for getting it right and had not done so. They were supposed to understand that the messiah would first die and then enter his glory. This is the rhythm of the Old Testament prophets. Suffering precedes glory.

Going through the whole Old Testament, Jesus shows them how he is at the center of the story. From the first five books of Moses to the last books of the prophets, the Scriptures show us the Lord Jesus Christ, both His person and His work. But it requires “interpretation.” It requires working through the texts and relating them to Christ. The narratives, types, symbols, illustrations and instruction are illuminated and interpreted through the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection.

As Luke is coming to the end of volume one of his two books, he is beginning to set the stage for volume two. The whole Old Testament advances the plan and purposes of God which are realized in Christ. They are fulfilled in Christ. He is, and brings about, the ultimate realities that those Scriptures pointed to. So, the cross and resurrection are the turning point in the redemptive mission God is on. The whole of redemptive history is a giant chiasm.

Creation

1st Coming – Cross

Resurrection

2nd Coming – Crown

This should have been no surprise to attentive hearts. But to the foolish and slow of heart, even today in the church, this is not clearly seen. So as we preach and teach, we are interpreting the Bible in a Christ-centered way praying that God’s grants the opening of eyes.

A Realization

(v.28-34)

A great realization takes place as they go from a plea to stay to good news to the disciples. Now *their eyes are opened* to recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread.

Their Eyes Opened

(v.28-31)

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

In the evening at the close of the day, they ask him to stay with them. "It is late. We are at home. Abide with us." Over the evening meal, Jesus breaks and blesses the bread. At this strategic moment, their eyes are opened so that they recognize the Lord. And then he is no longer there. He is gone. But they could not get over how they had felt while he had explained the Scriptures to them.

Luke is telling the story in such a way as to align this simple event with the larger trajectory of the Scriptures. At the end of the Old Covenant day, Jesus broke bread and drank from the cup with his disciples. He stood as the fulfiller of the Passover and the inaugurator of the New Covenant. That moment in redemptive history clearly places Christ in the spotlight. Eyes will be opened to the glorious Christ centeredness of the whole Bible. He is the central character, the main theme and grand climax of the story. But the story does not end with him. Opened eyes now will have moving feet and speaking lips.

Their News Shared

(v.32-34)

³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Remember the hour? It is late evening. They were home. They were fed and comfortable. Their beds were near. But they get up immediately and head back to Jerusalem. They have news to share. They find the disciples and the followers gathered together. Here is the great news. Jesus has risen indeed. He is alive. He is not just alive, but all that they expected in their reading of the Old Testament has now been turned up-side-down. And it begins with understanding what happened in the breaking of the bread.

See the rhythm? A road of discouragement and dashed hopes turns into good news when Jesus is met, the Bible is explained and the eyes are opened. Those whose eyes are opened now have a great story to tell – and they do.

A Room**(v.35-49)**

Now the scene shifts to the New Covenant where, with Christ present among His people, his followers' hearts and *minds are opened to understand the Scriptures*, the centrality of Christ in the Old Testament, the necessity of the cross in the gospel and the mission of the church in this age.

His Presence with Them**(v.35-41)**

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

From along a road, to appearing in a room, Jesus discloses his presence with them. Yes, imagine his sudden and unexpected appearance to disbelieving and troubled hearts. He greets their fears with words of "Peace". He challenges their troubled doubts with his questions. He assures them with his physical touch. He comforts them with his eating their food.

Luke has book ended his gospel in an interesting way. In 2:23-24, he writes, "*And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'*" First there is glory to God, then peace to men; but, in our text, peace to men, then glory to God. At the beginning, there is assurance that the bodily incarnation is real; but now, assurance that the bodily resurrection is real. The incarnation is real both in his birth and in his resurrection. He is no ghost. He is no angel. This is no myth. God has come in the flesh, lived a real life, died a sacrificial substitutionary death and was bodily raised from the dead. This is what the Old Testament spoke of in its narratives, types, songs and predictions.

Jesus knew that he would not always be physically with his people. He has to prepare them to become what his Father's plan has purposed for them. So he begins to teach them again.

His Preaching to Them**(v.42-48)**

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Jesus reminds them that this is nothing new. The Scriptures must be fulfilled, from beginning to end. His death and resurrection are the center-piece of that fulfillment. He had been teaching them this all along. Through these words, Luke reminds us that this is nothing new. The redemptive story of the Bible is meant to bring us to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

But they will not grasp this until a supernatural work is done. Note that these disciples had sat under Jesus' Spirit endowed teaching for three and half years. He has explained the Scriptures to them. Luke along with the gospel writers portray Jesus' teaching of the Old Testament in a way that is centered on himself and moving toward the New Covenant and a global advance of the kingdom. But they have not understood. They are a troubled, doubting, hopeless lot. They are huddled in fear while hearing the eye witness accounts of the resurrection. Now, the Lord opens their minds to understand the Scriptures. Sure, they have the intellect and rational ability to know what the words, sentences and paragraphs say. Just as their eyes have to be opened to see Christ, so also their minds must be opened to understand the Scriptures.

Not only must they understand the sacrifice of Christ, but they must also understand the scope of the kingdom. It is focused in proclaiming repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus name. It is about a conquest of the heart. And it is now global in all the nations. The kingdom now is expanded by the witnesses who will proclaim from all the Scriptures, the finished redemption by Christ and His full rule and reign over all people groups.

Now, it is easy to hear the phrases "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed..." and "You are witnesses of these things..." as commands. They are often preached as though they said, "You ought to preach repentance and forgiveness..." and "You ought to go and be witnesses..." The grammar does not permit this. Both are statements of fact. This is just simply the way it is. In the same way that the death and resurrection were redemptive-historical necessities so the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus name will happen. The disciples were witnesses, that is, they personally saw it take place and as a result will tell what they have seen and heard and experienced.

But for the kingdom mission to advance, for the proclamation to go out by the witnesses, one more promise must be fulfilled.

His Promise for Them

(v.49)

⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

"Look, pay attention to this," Jesus says. One more promise will be fulfilled and then power from on high. The redeeming and ruling presence promised by the New Covenant is Jesus Himself. The indwelling and enabling presence promised by the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit. Jesus, as the fulfiller, the bringer and the guarantor of the New Covenant had repeated the Father's promise to send the Spirit. So now they must wait in Jerusalem until the promised person comes and clothes them with power. Then, the kingdom mission will be advanced.

Careful readers of the Bible wonder about what appears here in Luke to be an omission. What about the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension? It sounds as though they leave this room and go to Bethany. Luke fills in this gap, writing in Acts 1:1-11. The omission here is intentional. Think of gate hook. There is the ring on the post and the hook on the door. The omission here is a hook intended to reach out latch in the ring of Acts 1.

A Response**(v.50-52)**

The risen King departs to go home bestowing His blessing on His subjects with their response in blessing Him in worship and praise.

The Lord's Blessing of the Disciples**(v.50-51)**

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

Why this now? Luke is showing us what the Lord's relation to us is now. He has risen and ascended into heaven. He has blessed them and through them us. His departure is not a retreat, but an advance of the kingdom. From heaven, about heaven and to heaven his worshipping witnesses are oriented.

The Disciple's Blessing God**(v.52-53)**

⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Here is the disciple's relation to Jesus now. We worship Christ in our place of life with great joy. We continually are blessing God in the midst of His people, who are now the new temple of God.

Wiersbe has helpfully noted, "Luke's Gospel begins in the temple (1:8ff) and ends in the temple. It begins with Mary and Elizabeth rejoicing and ends with all the believers rejoicing. Before they became Spirit-empowered witnesses, the believers were joyful worshipers..."² This rejoicing is framed and fueled by seeing Christ as the fulfillment of specific Old Testament texts. It blesses God for the blessing of Christ. It locates us in the redemptive and ruling flow of the kingdom mission. It is the long journey from the garden to the city, from the fall to the fulfillment, from a just expulsion to a gracious entrance. Now the door has swung open to all who believe, repent and call on the name of Jesus.

The book of Acts takes up that great redemptive story line and commissional movement. And so will we.

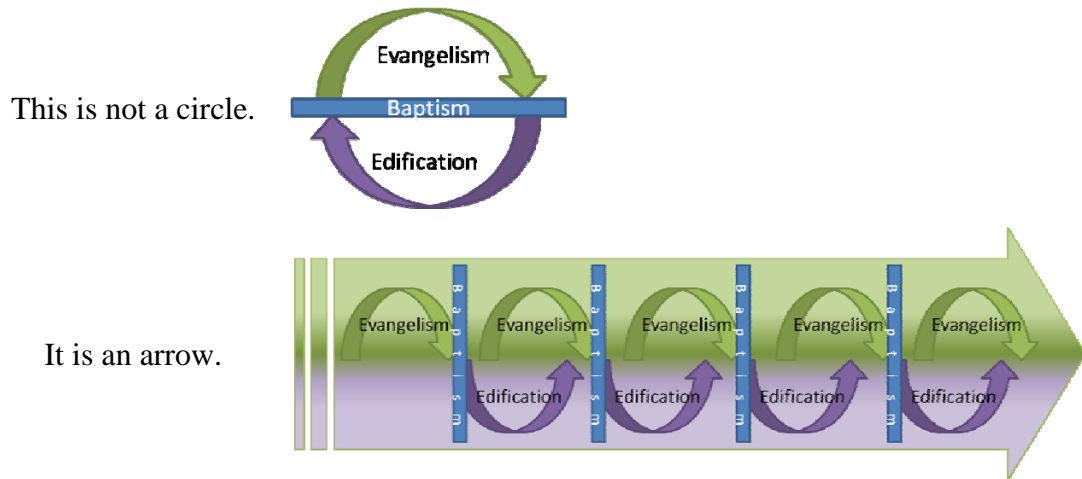
Reflect and Respond

So here we are just at the beginning of 2009. We are in the middle of a lot of things. We are in the middle of financial reversals, political transition, cultural war and theological downgrade. In the midst of all this mess, we are also in the middle of something grand and great and glorious. We are in the middle of the stream of redemptive history – of the great mission that God is on to call a redeemed people out of every tongue, tribe, nation and people group to glorify Himself through magnifying Christ. That is what we are all about.

We are a Commisisonal Church. This is our identity from Christ. We are a people gathered as a community, in exile from our homeland yet living as ambassadors and witnesses in a hostile land among unholy people.

We are becoming a Commisisonal Church. This is our transformation in ministry. We are going to become who we are. We do this as believers individually - transformation is the living out the new person we have already become. So we do this as a church – we begin living out the commisisonal community God has told us we really are.

We are together here as a missional community fulfilling our commisisonal mandate. That is, we are making disciples of all nations by evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved.



This is who we are. Now we will become who God says we are.

By God's Grace and through His Word
 we will cultivate in the hearts of God's people
 a passion for the supremacy
 of the Lord Jesus Christ
 magnified in love for Him
 manifested in love for one another
 and *multiplied by love for the lost.*

Notes

¹ Kent Hughes writes, “I believe the “Clopas” mentioned there is the “Cleopas” in Luke 24), a blood relative—Jesus’ uncle, the brother of his father Joseph. The best guess as to who the other traveler was is that it was his wife Mary, as she is identified in John 19:25. Uncle Cleopas and Aunt Mary, overcome with grief, were making the sad journey back to their lodging in Emmaus.” He further notes, “Marshall says that if these identifications are correct, they were probably the parents of Simeon who would later become Bishop of Jerusalem as Eusebius suggested, HE 3:11, 32; 4:22. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 894

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997, c1992), 206.