

A dramatic reading of Luke 24:13-35.

Only Luke has the story of the walk to Emmaus and it is a pretty bare bones story. He tells us that Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. So I thought it would be interesting to suggest scriptures that Jesus may have quoted to them. Luke tells us that there were two disciples walking toward the little town of Emmaus. The name of the one was Cleopas, the second disciple's name is not mentioned. Most simply assume that the second traveler was also a man, but scripture does not really say that. It is very possible that the second traveler was a woman and that this was a married couple. I invite you to imagine that this was indeed the case. Imagine that Cleopas and his wife, Rachel, are trudging down the road bantering with each other as older couples sometimes do.

Cleopas: Can you believe those hysterical women claiming that an empty tomb means that Jesus has come back from the dead?

Rachel: *Well they did say an angel told them that.*

Cleopas: Yeah, right. They had too much wine and too little sleep. That's what I think. Come back from the dead. Ha. Nothing but an old wives' tale if you ask me!

Rachel: *Careful there, old man. You are talking to an old wife.*

Jesus: **Excuse me for interrupting, but I couldn't help over hearing. What are you two talking about?**

Cleopas: Whoa! You gave me quite a start there stranger. I didn't see you coming.

Jesus: **Sorry about startling you. So why do you sound so sad?**

Cleopas: You must not be from around these parts. We are all pretty bummed out. We were sure that the Messiah had come. We were all set to follow him. But then the authorities falsely accused him and executed him. To make matters worse some of our women are claiming that he has come back from the dead. Nothing but a bunch of old . . .

Rachel: *(Interrupting) Cleopas, I am warning you.*

Cleopas: (shrugging) Well, anyway we got our hopes up for nothing. God let us down.

Jesus: **Hold on now, let's look at the big picture. Do you remember what God said to Moses at the burning bush?**

Cleopas: "Take off your shoes? Or was it gimme your shoes?"

Rachel: Cleopas, stop joking around. God said, “I have seen the misery of my people and I am sending you to bring them out of Egypt and into the promised land.”

Jesus: That’s right, and God did indeed bring our ancestors out of Egypt, just like he promised. And so now don’t you think God has heard the cries of his people again and will answer them? Do you remember what God promised about the Messiah?

Rachel: Uh, I know. God promised through the prophets to send us a savior, a messiah, but I am not sure about the rest of it.

Cleopas: (softly) So she admits that she doesn’t know everything. Will wonders never cease?!

Jesus: Even though God’s people wandered away from him and became weak, even though God allowed them to be overrun by their enemies, we know that this will not be the last word. God always keeps his promises. Through the prophet Nathan, God said to King David, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12-17) God also spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying that “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him . . . Isaiah 11:1

Rachel: I remember that. And there was something about being born of a virgin?

Jesus: That’s right, Isaiah prophesied to King Ahaz of Judah, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the virgin is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.”(Isaiah 7:14)

Cleopas: Rachel, how do you know that?

Rachel: Maybe it's because I don't fall asleep when the Rabbi is reading scripture, like some others I could mention.

Jesus: Do you remember where the prophets said this Messiah was to be born?

Cleopas: Hey, I remember that. "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." That's from the prophet Micah! (Micah 5:2)

Jesus: So where was this Jesus born?

Rachel: (With a touch of awe in her voice). In Bethlehem!

Cleopas: But wait. Wasn't Elijah the prophet supposed to come back before the Messiah?

Jesus: That's right. The prophet Malachi spoke the word of the Lord thus, "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." Malachi 4:5

Rachel: I got this one. John the Baptist was Elijah wasn't he?

Jesus: He was indeed.

Cleopas: Speaking of the prophets, do they say anything about the Messiah being from Nazareth? You know the old saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Jesus: Good question Cleopas. You remember this one from Isaiah don't you? "In the former time God brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined." Isaiah 9:1-2

Rachel: And Jesus lived in Galilee!

Cleopas: I remember some of that passage too. Something about a child has been born to us . . . ?

Jesus: I think you remember far more scripture than you give yourself credit for. So yes, “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Rachel: Tell us more, stranger. What else did God say?

Jesus: In Psalm 2 God says of the Messiah, “You are my son; today I have begotten you.” (Psalm 2:7) And through the prophet Isaiah God says, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.” (Isaiah 42:1)

Cleopas: (With wonder) I remember when Jesus was baptized by John. Some of those gathered swore they heard a voice from heaven saying, “You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased.” At the time I thought it was just, you know, another old wives’ tale.

Rachel: (gives Cleopas a look and snorts softly, then looking to Jesus) Why did Jesus refer to himself as “The Son of Man.” I always thought that was a strange title.

Jesus: That too was in the prophesy. From the prophet Daniel, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14)

Cleopas You sure know the scriptures, friend. So, there is another wild sounding tale about Jesus going up a mountain with his disciples, Moses and Elijah appeared with him and Jesus began to glow like the sun. Anything in scripture about that?

Jesus: Fire and light are both associated with the presence of God in scripture. When Moses went up the mountain and received the Ten Commandments from God, his face shone so brightly that people couldn't look at his face for days afterwards. And when Elijah was taken up into heaven, he went in a whirlwind with a chariot of fire.

Rachel: What I could never understand is why so many people rejected Jesus. If he was the messiah, why didn't everyone like him.

Jesus: There is a passage in Psalms that says, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." (Psalm 118:22) That saying comes from the building of the temple. As they were building the wall, the workers came across one of the cut stones that was not square like all the rest. So they threw that stone down into the valley. When the builders got to the top of the main arch, they sent word to the stone cutters that they were ready for the key stone that would hold everything together at the top. The stone cutters sent back word that they had already sent the key stone up. So a search was conducted and the odd stone that had been thrown out before was found. It proved to be the very stone that was needed to hold everything in place. Jesus was rejected because he wasn't what people thought he should be. But in the end he was the only one who could save them and hold everything together.

Cleopas: So his rejection was foretold. Wow! How about all those parables he was always telling?

Jesus: Yes, there is a prophecy about that too. It is found in Psalm 78. “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable . . .” (Psalm 78:1-4.)

Rachel: How about the Messiah stilling a storm. I heard that Jesus did that!

Jesus: From the Psalms again, this from the 107th Psalm. “For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity; they reeled and staggered like drunkards, and were at their wits’ end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress; he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.” (Psalm 107:25-29)

Cleopas: All that you say makes sense. But I just don’t see why Jesus had to die. People say that when he was on the cross, he quoted Psalm 22. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus: He did indeed, and with good reason. That psalm says, “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet . . . They stare and they gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. (Psalm 22:16 & 18)

Rachel: They did that to Jesus. I saw them do that!

Jesus: Yes, it was necessary for him to die for the saving of the world. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgression, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5)

Rachel: So it was all according to God’s plan. Wow!

Cleopas: I still can't get over the fact that Judas, one of his most trusted disciples betrayed him.

Jesus: Psalm 41 says, "Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me, . . . " (Psalm 41:9)

Cleopas: Do the prophets say that Jesus will come back from the dead?

Jesus: In Psalm 30, David wrote, "O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit." (Psalm 30:3) More than that, did not the master himself tell you that he would return?

Rachel: That's right when we were leaving the temple that day, someone asked him for a sign of his authority, he said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." That is what he meant, isn't it? That he would rise from the dead on the third day?

Jesus: (Smiling) Yes.

Rachel: Oh Cleopas, that is what the women said the angel told them. "Do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the palace where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.'" (Matthew 28:5-7)

Cleopas: That's what they said. Still, I would really like to see him for myself. "Seeing is believing . . . and all that. Hey look, we have arrived. Friend, you have been so helpful, won't you come in and have supper with us?"

Jesus: Your kindness touches me. Yes, I will come in with you.

Rachel: Ah, here is food. Let's sit and enjoy it. You know I have to say, that was a fast trip. I was so caught up in what you were saying that I didn't even notice the miles.

Jesus: (Picking up the bread) Allow me to say the blessing.

Rachel and Cleopas (bow heads)

Jesus: “**Blessed are you, O God, Lord of all, who brings forth bread from the earth . . . This is my body given for you.**”

Cleopas: Wait, what? That’s what Jesus said at the last supper. Where did he go?

Rachel: *Oh, Cleopas. That was Jesus. You know it was the master. I don’t know why I didn’t recognize him before. Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he opened the scriptures for us?*

Cleopas: I have seen the Lord! Praise God, I have seen the Lord!

Rachel: *We have to go back. I’ll not sleep tonight anyway. We have to go back and tell the others!*

Cleopas: Yes, yes, let’s do that. (Wondering voice) I have seen the Lord. He is alive. He is risen!

Rachel: *He is risen indeed!*