

# Bible Nerd Guide Luke 24:13-35

## “We Had Hoped”

The Risen Jesus, Dashed Expectations, and Reading All Scripture Through the Messiah

## Why This Passage Matters So Much

Luke 24:13-35 is one of the most important passages in the Gospels for at least three reasons.

First, it is deeply pastoral. It gives language to disappointment. The line, “**We had hoped,**” is one of the most honest statements in Scripture.

Second, it is profoundly christological. Jesus does not merely appear alive. He interprets his death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Third, it is hermeneutically explosive. This is one of the clearest passages in the Bible showing that the Old Testament must be reread through the suffering, vindication, and glory of the Messiah.

If John 5 gives us Jesus saying the Scriptures testify about him, Luke 24 shows him actually doing that reading with his disciples.

## 1. Literary Context in Luke

This story comes late on resurrection day. That timing matters.

Luke 24 unfolds in a deliberate pattern:

- the women discover the empty tomb
- angelic messengers announce Jesus has risen
- the apostles initially struggle to believe
- two disciples walk to Emmaus in disappointment
- Jesus is revealed in Scripture and bread
- Jesus appears to the gathered disciples
- Jesus opens their minds to understand the Scriptures

So the Emmaus story sits right in the middle of Luke’s resurrection narrative as a kind of interpretive hinge.

That is important. Luke does not present resurrection as a bare miracle requiring mere astonishment. He presents it as an event that demands **interpretation**. The resurrection must be understood in relation to:

- Israel's Scriptures
- the Messiah's suffering
- the mission to the nations
- the disciples' transformed understanding

This means Luke 24 is not just a "cool resurrection appearance." It is a text about **how resurrection changes reading**.

## 2. The Journey Away from Jerusalem

### Luke 24:13

"That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus..."

The movement away from Jerusalem is symbolic as well as geographic.

Jerusalem in Luke is not random. It is the city toward which Jesus has been moving for a long time. Luke 9:51 says Jesus "set his face" toward Jerusalem. It is the place of:

- prophetic destiny
- rejection
- crucifixion
- resurrection
- eventual witness

To walk away from Jerusalem in this moment is, narratively speaking, to walk away from the place where God's decisive act has just occurred.

That does not mean these disciples are apostates. It means they are disillusioned. They are leaving the scene of shattered expectations.

This is important pastorally:

**disappointment often looks like slow withdrawal, not dramatic rebellion.**

## 3. "Talking with Each Other" and "Discussing"

### Luke 24:14-15

Luke uses multiple verbs for speaking and discussing. The sense is not casual chatting. These disciples are actively processing, debating, puzzling, and re-narrating the events.

This is what disappointed people do. They replay. They reinterpret. They try to make sense of what just happened.

Their problem is not that they are thinking too much. It is that they are reading the events with a messianic framework that is too small.

That becomes one of the central lessons of the passage:  
**their pain is real, but their interpretation is incomplete.**

## 4. Jesus Draws Near Before He Is Recognized

### **Luke 24:15-16**

“Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”

This is one of the most comforting lines in the New Testament.

Jesus is present before he is recognized.

That resonates with the rest of the resurrection narratives:

- Mary sees Jesus before she recognizes him
- the disciples in John 20 need Jesus to stand among them
- Thomas must move from demand to confession
- here, Jesus walks beside disappointed disciples who do not know it is him

The passive wording, “their eyes were kept,” suggests divine restraint rather than mere emotional distraction. Luke wants us to see that recognition is not merely visual. It is tied to revelation.

That is a major Lucan theme. Seeing and understanding are related, but they are not identical. People can witness events and still fail to grasp their meaning until God opens their eyes or minds.

This becomes even clearer later in the chapter:

- their eyes are opened at the table
- their minds are opened to understand the Scriptures

Luke is showing us that resurrection recognition requires more than proximity. It requires divine illumination.

## 5. The Sadness on Their Faces

### **Luke 24:17**

“And they stood still, looking sad.”

That is such a vivid little phrase.

Luke slows the moment down. Jesus asks what they are talking about, and they stop walking. Their whole emotional state is written on their faces.

The Greek behind “sad” suggests gloom or downcast sorrow. This is not mild discouragement. This is grief mixed with disappointment and confusion.

Theologically, this matters because Luke does not treat sadness as incompatible with discipleship. He treats it as one of the places where the risen Christ meets disciples.

This whole series is doing that:

- grief
- fear
- doubt
- disappointment

Luke 24 reinforces the pattern. Resurrection life does not bypass sorrow. It enters it.

## 6. “Are You the Only Visitor to Jerusalem...?”

### **Luke 24:18**

Cleopas’ question is wonderfully ironic.

He thinks Jesus is the only person who does not know what has happened.

But in truth, Jesus is the only one who fully knows what has happened.

Luke loves this kind of irony. Characters often speak more truly or more foolishly than they realize. Here the irony sharpens the point: the disciples know the facts, but they do not yet know the meaning.

That distinction is crucial.

Many people know the facts of the gospel story:

- Jesus died
- the tomb was empty

- reports circulated

But the decisive question is not whether the events occurred. It is whether we understand what God was doing in them.

## 7. “What Things?” and the Pastoral Use of Questions

### **Luke 24:19**

Jesus asks, “What things?”

He is not asking because he lacks information. He is inviting disclosure.

This is a pattern in Scripture. God often asks questions not to gain data but to draw people out:

- “Where are you?” in Genesis 3
- “What are you doing here, Elijah?” in 1 Kings 19
- Jesus’ many questions in the Gospels

This is pastorally important:

**Jesus invites the disciples to narrate their disappointment before he corrects their interpretation.**

That matters because people do not only need information. They often need space to articulate pain before they can hear truth clearly.

## 8. “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth”

### **Luke 24:19**

Their description of Jesus is striking:

“a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”

This is not false. It is incomplete.

They correctly identify Jesus as:

- mighty in deed
- mighty in word
- prophet-like

This language echoes Old Testament descriptions, especially Moses-like prophetic categories. It resonates with Luke’s broader portrayal of Jesus as a prophet, but also more than a prophet.

The issue is that their true statements still fall short of his full identity and mission.

That is a helpful reminder:

you can say many correct things about Jesus and still misunderstand the center of his work.

## 9. “We Had Hoped”

### Luke 24:21

“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

This is the emotional core of the story.

The grammar points backward. Their hope is described as something past, something now apparently broken.

It is not merely, “We hoped.” It has the flavor of:

**“This was our hope, and now it looks shattered.”**

And notice the object of their hope:

**“that he was the one to redeem Israel.”**

That is a loaded phrase.

To “redeem Israel” would evoke:

- exodus language
- deliverance language
- restoration of the people of God
- liberation from enemies
- renewal of covenant life

Their hope was not necessarily wrong. The problem was their expectation of how redemption would arrive.

They expected something like visible triumph.

Jesus brought redemption through suffering, death, and resurrection.

That gap between expectation and divine fulfillment is the whole tension of the story.

This is one of the deepest truths of the passage:

**disappointment with God is often disappointment with our interpretation of God’s plan, not with God’s actual faithfulness.**

## 10. The Women, the Empty Tomb, and Confused Testimony

### Luke 24:22-24

The disciples recount the women's testimony and the empty tomb, but their tone suggests confusion rather than faith.

They know:

- the women reported a vision of angels
- the tomb was empty
- others confirmed the empty tomb
- Jesus himself was not seen

So the problem is not lack of data. The problem is interpretive inability.

Luke is again emphasizing that resurrection faith is not merely produced by raw facts. It requires the Scriptures to be reread and the heart to be opened.

## 11. "O Foolish Ones, and Slow of Heart"

### Luke 24:25

This can sound harsher in English than Luke likely intends. Jesus is not lashing out. He is diagnosing.

"Foolish" here does not mean morally contemptible. It means uncomprehending, lacking proper understanding. "Slow of heart" points to sluggishness in embracing what God had already said.

The issue is not intellectual weakness alone. It is that their hearts have been slow to believe the full witness of the prophets.

This is important:

**the disciples' disappointment is tied not merely to emotional pain but to deficient scriptural imagination.**

They know some Bible. They do not yet know how the Bible's major themes converge in the suffering Messiah.

## 12. "Was It Not Necessary...?"

### Luke 24:26

“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

The word “necessary” is crucial in Luke-Acts.

Luke often uses “must” or “it is necessary” language to describe divine purpose. It points to God’s redemptive plan, not blind fate.

Examples elsewhere in Luke:

- the Son of Man must suffer
- the gospel must be proclaimed
- Scripture must be fulfilled

So when Jesus says the Christ had to suffer and then enter glory, he is saying:

- the cross was not accidental
- the Messiah’s suffering was not a contradiction of God’s plan
- the path to glory always ran through suffering

This is one of Luke’s great theological convictions:

**suffering and glory belong together in the messianic vocation.**

That is also true for discipleship in Luke. Jesus’ followers too are called into a pattern where suffering may precede vindication.

## 13. “Beginning with Moses and All the Prophets”

### **Luke 24:27**

This is one of the most discussed verses in the Bible.

Jesus “interpreted” to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

A few important observations:

#### A. Luke does not list the passages

That omission is frustrating and brilliant. It means Luke is more interested in teaching us the **scope** and **method** than in giving us a narrow list.

#### B. “Moses and all the Prophets” is a broad way of referring to Israel’s Scriptures

This does not mean only direct predictive prophecy. It signals the entire scriptural witness, especially as it converges on messianic suffering and glory.

### C. Jesus reads the Old Testament christologically

This is one of the clearest foundations for reading the Bible as a unified story centered on Christ.

But nuance matters here.

This does **not** mean:

- every verse is a coded direct prediction
- the Old Testament has no meaning in its own historical setting
- we should flatten genre, context, or authorial intention

It **does** mean:

- the whole scriptural story reaches its climax in Jesus
- patterns, themes, promises, types, symbols, institutions, and hopes find fulfillment in him
- the Messiah reframes how the earlier Scriptures are rightly understood

This is why this passage changes the way many people read the Old Testament.

## 14. What Might Jesus Have Shown Them?

Luke does not say, but it is reasonable to imagine Jesus tracing major themes such as:

The righteous sufferer

Psalms like Psalm 22 and Psalm 69

The vindicated innocent one

Patterns from Joseph, David, and the persecuted prophets

The suffering servant

Especially Isaiah 52:13-53:12

The rejected stone becoming the cornerstone

Psalm 118

The prophet like Moses

Deuteronomy 18, with broader exodus fulfillment

The son of man who receives vindication

Daniel 7, read through suffering and exaltation

Covenant, sacrifice, Passover

Exodus, Leviticus, and the pattern of atoning deliverance

Death and restoration motifs

Jonah, Hosea, Ezekiel 37, and others

Again, the point is not to force every detail into a direct prophecy. The point is that the whole story, in many ways, was already leaning toward a Messiah who would suffer and then be glorified.

## 15. Jesus as the Hermeneutical Key

Luke 24 is one of the great texts for Christian interpretation because it teaches that Jesus is not only the subject of the Scriptures but also the key to their coherence.

This has enormous implications.

### **It means the Bible is not mainly a collection of moral examples**

The central question is not first, "What should I do?" but "How does this bear witness to God's saving work culminating in Jesus?" We could write at the top of every page of Scripture, "Where is Jesus?".

### **It means the Old Testament must be read with patience and typological sensitivity**

Not everything is direct prediction. Much is pattern, trajectory, institution, promise, tension, and unresolved longing.

### **It means the cross and resurrection are not add-ons**

They are the interpretive center.

This is one reason this passage changes the way people preach the Old Testament. Instead of asking only, "How is this useful?" the preacher begins asking, "How does this story, promise, symbol, or tension reach toward Christ?"

## 16. “Stay with Us”

**Luke 24:28-29**

The disciples urge Jesus to stay.

This moment is beautiful because they still do not recognize him fully, yet they want his company.

That is spiritually significant:  
sometimes disciples desire the presence of Christ before they fully understand him.

There is already a warmth, a gravity, a compelling presence in the conversation. Their hearts are being drawn before their eyes are opened.

That too is part of discipleship.

## 17. The Breaking of Bread

**Luke 24:30-31**

“He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened...”

This action echoes several moments in Luke:

- the feeding miracles
- the Last Supper
- Jesus’ table fellowship throughout the Gospel

Scholars debate whether this is a direct Eucharistic scene or simply a meal scene with Eucharistic resonance. The safest answer is that it is at least heavily resonant with the table patterns Luke has already established.

The key point is that Jesus is recognized in a familiar, Jesus-shaped action: he takes, blesses, breaks, and gives.

That suggests recognition comes not only through Scripture explained but also through Jesus’ embodied self-giving presence.

Word and table belong together here.

## 18. “Their Eyes Were Opened”

This phrase echoes Genesis 3 in an interesting way.

In Genesis 3, eyes are opened after disobedience, and the result is shame and exile.

Here, eyes are opened through the self-giving action of the risen Jesus, and the result is recognition and renewed mission.

Luke may not be making a direct explicit allusion, but the contrast is theologically suggestive: what was distorted in the old human story is being healed in the risen Christ.

At minimum, the scene reinforces a larger biblical pattern: God must open human perception if people are to see truly.

## 19. “And He Vanished from Their Sight”

### **Luke 24:31**

Jesus’ vanishing underscores that resurrection presence is real but not ordinary in the old sense.

The point is not spectacle. The point is that his presence has done its work:

- they now understand differently
- they now see differently
- they now return differently

The emphasis shifts from visible possession of Jesus to transformed understanding of Jesus.

That matters for Luke’s readers and for us. We are not called to cling to visible access. We are called to live as people whose eyes and minds have been opened by Scripture and the risen Lord.

## 20. “Did Not Our Hearts Burn Within Us?”

### **Luke 24:32**

This line is deeply memorable, but it is often sentimentalized.

The burning heart here is not mere religious excitement. It is the inner effect of Jesus opening the Scriptures in a way that awakens recognition and hope.

In other words, their hearts burned because:

- Christ was present
- Scripture was being rightly interpreted
- disappointment was being reframed by the divine story

This is not anti-intellectual. It is the union of understanding and affection.

The heart burns when the Scriptures are opened around Christ.

That is a beautiful model for Christian teaching and preaching.

## 21. They Return to Jerusalem

### **Luke 24:33**

They get up that same hour and return.

Earlier they were walking away in disappointment.  
Now they are hurrying back in witness.

This is one of Luke's subtle but powerful reversals.

Resurrection interpretation produces missional redirection.

They do not remain in private spiritual insight. They return to the community and testify:

“The Lord has risen indeed.”

That matters because resurrection faith is not meant to remain solitary. It sends people back into the gathered people of God with renewed understanding.

## 22. Major Theological Themes

### A. Disappointment and faith are not opposites

The disciples' dashed hopes came from real hope. This passage gives language to honest discouragement without treating it as apostasy.

### B. Jesus can be present before he is recognized

This is one of the passage's deepest pastoral gifts. Felt absence is not always actual absence.

### C. The Scriptures require christological rereading

Jesus teaches that Moses and the Prophets find their coherence in him, particularly in his suffering and glory.

### D. The Messiah's suffering was necessary

The cross was not a derailment. It was central to the divine plan.

## E. True recognition joins Scripture, presence, and table fellowship

Luke brings together interpretation, presence, and communal life.

## F. Resurrection transforms not just emotions but interpretation

The disciples' hearts, minds, and direction all change because the story is reread through Jesus.

# 23. Hermeneutical Implications for Reading the Old Testament

This is where the passage becomes especially important..

Luke 24 does not teach a lazy "Jesus is secretly in every random verse" approach.

It teaches a disciplined christological reading shaped by:

- promise and fulfillment
- type and antitype
- suffering and glory
- covenant and kingdom
- exile and restoration
- sacrifice and atonement
- temple, priesthood, kingship, prophecy
- righteous suffering and divine vindication

That means when reading the Old Testament, we should ask:

- How does this contribute to the story that reaches its climax in Christ?
- What patterns or tensions here are resolved in Jesus?
- How does the cross and resurrection reframe this passage?
- How does this shape our reading of God's character and purposes?

This passage helps rescue people from two errors:

- reading the Old Testament as mainly moral examples
- reading the Old Testament as disconnected from Jesus except for a few prooftexts

Luke 24 says no. The whole story was moving somewhere.

## 24. Pastoral Implications

This passage also matters because it tells disappointed disciples what Jesus does with their unmet expectations.

He does not merely say:

- “Cheer up”
- “Have more faith”
- “Don’t be sad”

He walks with them.

He listens to them.

He corrects them.

He opens the Scriptures.

He stays with them.

He reveals himself.

He sends them back with witness.

That is a deeply pastoral pattern.

When people are disappointed, they usually do not only need emotional comfort. They need their story reframed in the larger story of God.

## 25. Key Study Questions

### Text and Structure

- Why does Luke place this story where he does in chapter 24?
- What is the significance of the disciples walking away from Jerusalem?

### Recognition and Presence

- Why are their eyes kept from recognizing Jesus?
- What does that suggest about revelation in Luke?

### Theology of Hope

- What exactly did they hope Jesus would do?
- In what sense was their hope right, and in what sense was it wrongly framed?

## Scripture and Interpretation

- What does Jesus' interpretation imply about reading Moses and the Prophets?
- How does this passage shape Christian preaching of the Old Testament?

## Suffering and Glory

- Why is the necessity of the Messiah's suffering central to this story?
- How does this challenge triumphalist readings of the kingdom?

## Eucharistic / Table Themes

- Why are their eyes opened in the breaking of bread?
- How do Scripture and table function together in the story?

## 26. Memorable One-Liners for Teaching

- Disappointment is not always the collapse of faith. Sometimes it is faith colliding with incomplete expectations.
- Jesus can be present before he is recognized.
- The problem is not always the story itself. Sometimes the problem is how we are reading the story.
- The resurrection does not just change the ending. It changes how you read everything that came before it.
- The Old Testament is not a disconnected library of religious texts. It is a unified witness that finds its climax in Jesus.
- The Messiah's suffering was not a failure of the plan. It was the center of the plan.
- Hearts burn when the Scriptures are opened around Christ.
- Because He lives, your disappointment does not have the right to narrate the whole story.

## 27. A Concise Theological Summary

Luke 24:13-35 presents the risen Jesus as the one who meets disappointed disciples not by denying their pain but by reinterpreting their story through the Scriptures. Their dashed hopes are not resolved by a sentimental reassurance, but by learning that the Messiah's suffering and glory were always at the center of God's plan. The resurrection therefore becomes the lens through which both life and Scripture must be reread. Jesus is present before he is recognized, patient before he is seen, and faithful in transforming disappointment into witness.

## 28. Final Word

This passage has changed the way many Christians (including this author) read the Old Testament because it reveals that Scripture is not mainly a collection of spiritual lessons or isolated stories. It is a single, God-breathed story that reaches its center in the suffering, risen Messiah. And it changes the way many Christians endure disappointment because it shows that the risen Jesus is often nearest when he feels most hidden.

He walks with disappointed disciples.

He opens confused minds.

He warms cold hearts.

He turns people around.

That is still what he does.