

Occasional Update #19

18 November 2023

Luke 24:13-23 Now on that same day [that Jesus rose from the dead] two of them [Jesus' disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.

And He said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered Him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be condemned to death and crucified Him.

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 took place.

Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find His body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive!

H O P E

At times, all of us have had our hope dashed to pieces. What we wanted, worked for, and expected, failed to come to pass. On the day of Jesus' crucifixion, maybe thousands of people who were there, or who heard what had happened to Jesus, had their hopes suddenly brought to an end. Their hope of Jesus being the Messiah, the one who would deliver the people from foreign control and suppression, had come to an end. Their hope was that He would redeem Israel – something which is not just physical, but spiritual as well: Redemption!

When I started at university I wanted to become a chemistry teacher. I had done well at school in my 7th form year and did very well in chemistry in my first year at university. Then, in my second year ... I failed chemistry! I was shattered; I couldn't believe it. "Surely, Lord, this can't be!" But it was. The long and short of this was that God used this situation for my good! I finished my Bachelor's degree, and did my Honours degree in Chemistry, and eventually became a senior lecturer at Massey University, in Chemistry and other science-related subjects. I taught for over 40 years!

Romans 5:3-5 ... we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and ***hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.***

FAITH – HOPE – LOVE

The basis for our Hope is our Faith in a God of Love. We have a loving God who is faithful and true to His word and His promises; therefore we have Someone – our sure foundation – who gives us hope. He is our Rock and surety.

Our love for God, and our love for other people, is based on His love for us. At times, people may fail us but God's love will never fail.

Even though God's ways and times may be very different from ours, our hope is in Him and His ways.

Many years ago, I was in the Philippines and one day the man who cleaned my hotel room

came in and was obviously very distressed. His wife was very near to giving birth but there was serious concern that both she and the baby might not survive. His hope was almost gone. I was about to leave for the airport to catch a plane back home, but spent a few minutes praying for him, his wife, and baby. He was not a Christian then. I gave him my card and left.

Of course, I prayed for them for some time after I got home but had no contact with him; I had no idea what had happened. Nineteen years later he emailed me! The birth went well, his daughter Ana, was now 19. He had become a Christian, and an evangelist. His wife and 8 children had all become Christians, 7 were in full-time ministries, and Ana was in Bible College training! His hope, while weak, was realised; God was his only hope. A couple of years later I was in Manilla airport again, and met him, his wife and some of his children – including Ana! Praise God!

Our hope at times may be weak, it might take time to see its fulfilment, but our hope is in Him! A phrase which I sometimes think of is, “Lord, I don’t understand, but I still trust You.”

Edward Mote, in 1838, wrote a hymn which says, in part:

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. ...

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

That was Edward Mote’s Hope, based on his Faith in God’s Love for him.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that *whoever* believes in Him [*that includes me!*] should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This is our great HOPE, based on our FAITH and trust in Him, and His great LOVE for us.

Let us rejoice and give thanks to God for sending His Son into our world to give us the sure Hope of everlasting life with Him and those who love Him.

Let us give thanks for Jesus’ shed blood that bought our salvation.

Let us praise God for the Faith, and Hope, and Love that He has given us!

MESSIAH – ‘the Anointed One’ – Christ

In the later years of the Old Testament (e.g., Daniel 9:25-26) and the early days of John the Baptist (e.g., Matthew 3:1-11) there was an expectancy of the coming of a Messiah – someone who would deliver Israel and the Jewish people from the oppressive bondage they had been under (e.g., Babylon, Rome, etc.) This man would be a mighty warrior who would set them free.

As we all know, however, the Messiah was born as a baby – the Son of God! Moreover, He was later tried for blasphemy, condemned, died on a cross, and buried in a tomb! His followers lost all hope that Jesus was the Messiah they had hoped for.

But, as we also know, He is the Messiah, whose death bought our salvation – set us free from sin, and slavery to satan, and brought us into the eternal Kingdom of God!

FOR MEDITATION: What is *my* hope based on?

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, ... (Hebrews 6:19)

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who has promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

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