

## Resurrection as a Way of Life: Part One

Speaker: Tim Mackie

[EMSB theme fades in]

Hey everybody, I'm Tim Mackie, and this is my podcast, "Exploring My Strange Bible." I am a card-carrying Bible history and language nerd who thinks that Jesus of Nazareth is utterly amazing and worth following with everything that you have. On this podcast, I'm putting together the last twenty years' worth of lectures and sermons, where I've been exploring the strange and wonderful story of the Bible, and how it invites us into the mission of Jesus and the journey of faith. And I hope this can all be helpful for you too. I also helped start this thing called BibleProject. We make animated videos and podcasts and classes about all kinds of topics in Bible and theology. You can find all those resources at [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com). With all that said, let's dive into the episode for this week.

[EMSB theme fades out]

All right. This episode is the first of a new, five-part series. It's called "Resurrection as a Way of Life." It's a collection of five teachings that I did on the idea of "resurrection" and "new creation" in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles—and why this is such a crucial, crucial part of a follower of Jesus's view of the world, and of the future, and of themselves. And so there you go. This was a really, deeply meaningful series. I was able to bring together a lot of years of reading and reflection, and I hope it's helpful for you.

This first episode is going to be camping out in one of the resurrection stories in the New Testament—in Luke 24. There's a story about the empty tomb—but what this teaching focuses on is that unique story in Luke 24 about these two guys who were followers of Jesus, but then the crucifixion and execution of Jesus just shattered all of their hopes.

And so they're going back home to their town of Emmaus, and their experience with Jesus—the risen Jesus—and what happens to them, and how they go from a state of blindness to true sight, or true vision. It's remarkable—and why Luke is including this story in his account of Jesus, and what it has to do with you, as a reader of Luke's Gospel. Well, there you go—that's what we're going to explore. It's one of my favorite stories in the New Testament. It's really powerful, and I hope this is helpful for you. So let's go for it.

[Musical break (02:36–02:42)]

We are spending this summer in a series that we launched out of, from the book of Daniel, which ended with the prophet Daniel wondering what he can hope for in the world as he looks out. And what he is given to hope for, at the end of the book of Daniel, is the hope of resurrection—the hope that evil and death don't get the last word in God's world, but that there's a whole new kind of life and a new creation that God has in store. And so we took that as, like—it's like a ski jump at the bottom of the hill. And we let it launch us into what we're going to explore all summer, which is the hope of the resurrection.

The story about Jesus's resurrection and the reality of the resurrection—I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about Jesus rising from the dead—but it wasn't something, for the earliest Christians, that they talked about just once a year. It's actually something they talked about every time they gathered.

It was such—the resurrection of Jesus was such a category-shattering experience for the earliest followers of Jesus that you find profound reflections on it in every single writing in the New Testament. And so we are going to take this summer and allow the empty tomb, and the risen Jesus, and what that means for the world to, hopefully, do the same thing to us as well.

Today we're looking at a story—I think it's one of the most beautifully told stories in the whole of the New Testament that we heard read. It's the story about these two disciples of Jesus who are coming to terms with this strange reality of Jesus's resurrection from the dead. But before we dive into the story, as I sometimes do, I want to, kind of, prepare the ground, to give us a framework for how to even think about what's happening in this story.

And to do that, I want to show you a picture. And it's a picture you've probably seen before—actually my hunch is that most of you have seen this picture before. It's an oil painting that's one of the most famous paintings of Jesus ever, in history. Have you guys seen this painting before? [Tim refers to visual] So, 1941, by a painter called Warner Sallman—you may not have known that. This is a pre-World War II painting.

You guys, this painting of Jesus is the most mass-reproduced image of Jesus in human history. There have been over five hundred *million* prints of this painting—if you include calendars and lampshades and magnets—[Tim laughs]—five hundred million. It's the most reproduced image of Jesus in Christian history—in world history—this one right here. I mean, look, it's 1941—it's not even that old in terms of how long Christianity's been around.

You can just see—it's very captivating, right? Jesus is depicted here—he's very serene, he's simple, he's staring at something. So that—there's kind of like a mystery, but a purpose to him. There you go. It's the “Head of Christ”—Warner Sallman's “Head of Christ”—five hundred million of these floating around planet Earth.

Now here's what's interesting, is: you know, every image or representation of Jesus has a story underneath it. It also has a whole, usually unexamined, series of assumptions driving it. If you grew up with this image, which maybe some of you have, this image shapes how you think about Jesus—in probably more ways than we could ever realize.

There's one really outstanding feature of this painting that would be obvious to somebody 2,000 years ago—[Tim laughs] right? Anyone? It's the fact that Jesus is a white European-looking man—[Tim laughs] you know?—that's struck with impeccable hair, right? He's not too far from a mullet. I don't know if you could just shorten the top, and then he's going for it.

Anyhow, yeah, so very clearly: Jesus is a white, handsome, beautiful, European-looking man, right? Are you with me? It's just clear as day. It might not be clear as day to you, depending on the culture you've grown up in. So here's what's fascinating: In 2002, there was a group of British New Testament scholars. And they teamed up with a group of forensic scientists, and they did this tour all around Jerusalem and the regions around, and they got access to all of the skeletons and skulls found in tombs, in and around Jerusalem, dating to the time of Jesus.

And they did these 3-D scans of all the skulls, which you might think is kind of gross. But here's what they wanted to do. They wanted to get: what is the average-looking skull of a Jewish man from the time of Jesus? And then they let the forensic scientists—you guys see, in forensic scientists, how they can, you know, if they find, like, a corpse in a river and they need to re-piece together: “Who was this person?”—they can do these things. Do you know that this is possible in the world today?

So do you get where this is going? So they're like, "Well, okay, let's reconstruct the face of an average Jewish man from the first century. And we'll at least be closer to the face of Jesus than Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ." And so, here you go—you can—there you go. [Tim gestures to visual] Now I'm not saying this is Jesus, but are the odds much, much better that Jesus looked something *more* like this than Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ"—what are the odds?

The odds are much higher that Jesus was mid-five foot—average male skeleton of a Jewish man in the first century was mid-five feet—5'6" average—and coarse, black hair—much larger nose than Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ." There you go.

Really think about this. If you're happy to have Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ" hanging somewhere in your house, why is it that a less-handsome Jesus is less appealing to you to have hanging up—it's *Jesus*. [Tim laughs] Right? If I'm a follower of Jesus, it makes all the sense in the world to have some representation of him in my house. Why not have one that's almost certainly more accurate? What's going on there—are you with me?

And what this raises is the whole—it's very interesting—it raises this age-old truth about how we perceive people: that the way that you and I perceive someone's appearance drives and shapes our assumptions about them, doesn't it? And so there are many people—at least five-hundred million—who are much more comfortable with a white, European Jesus—"handsome Jesus"—represented in their home than not. And that just speaks to something about the human condition—about how we perceive each other and how we perceive people.

This doesn't even need to be said. It's like a proverb. All of us are constantly "sizing one another up" in terms of our appearance. And based off of your appearance or my appearance—and when you first look at somebody—we begin to generate stories about each other, based off of that assumption when we first—are you guys with me? I'm the only one who does this? [Tim laughs] We all do this. It's part of the human nature, I guess.

And how many of you have ever first seen somebody—you had a first or second impression about a person—and you thought you knew what they were all about? And then over time—whether it's a coworker, maybe—or someone at school—or in your neighborhood, or something—and over time, as you've actually got to know that person, you will never confess it out loud, but you realize just how wrong you were—from your first impressions of these people. Have you ever had that experience before? It's exactly right.

So it's true in relationships, just, in general. And the only way to actually get over your wrong assumptions about somebody—it's very simple. It's not complicated at all. You

just—you have to get to know them. [Tim grins] You just get to know the person. You spend time with them, and you learn their real story—not the one you made up in your head when you first saw them, based off of their appearance.

Like, *relationships*—and that requires humility. To truly humble and expose the assumptions and preconceptions you’ve had about someone, and to allow who this person actually is to redefine the story that you think about them—that requires humility. It means acknowledging that I am wrong—that I make wrong assumptions about people. This is true in relationships in general.

And these images of Jesus, I think, highlight it in a different way that, somehow, we need to recognize—and this is true of every disciple of Jesus, as we’re going to see, from the very beginning—that we come to Jesus with pre-loaded assumptions and preconceptions about who he is and what his story is, and what he’s all about. And the Warner Sallman’s “Head of Christ” shows that perfectly.

And so I don’t know what you thought when you first saw this almost certainly more accurate representation of what Jesus’s face, or complexion, was. There’s a humbling that must take place, because if we don’t allow who Jesus *actually* is to challenge our assumptions about him, there’s a truth that this story shows us: that we actually will remain blind to who he is. We can be a Christian—we can go to church—we can read the Bible—somebody can do that for years and remain *totally blind* to who Jesus actually is.

And so what this story, what these images raise for us is: what does it take to have the “blinders removed,” so that my assumptions about Jesus get brought out into the spotlight and shown for what they truly are? And that’s exactly what this story here, in Luke 24—the cross and the resurrection, if you let them sink in to your mind and heart—will shatter everything you thought you knew about Jesus, and about ourselves.

So let’s dive into the story here about the two on the road to Emmaus. We can take the more accurate face of Jesus down. It might bother you. Devin’s staring at you the whole time. I don’t know. Maybe it won’t—maybe it won’t bother you. Here’s the story. Last week, Tom helped us explore the empty tomb story and the risen Jesus story in the Gospel according to what—last week? The Gospel according to John—yeah, from John.

This week, we’re looking at Luke’s account of the resurrection appearance of Jesus. So Jesus, in Luke’s story, has been executed. The empty tomb has already happened in the story, right before this. So a number of women-disciples of Jesus, and then Peter, go to the tomb. He’s nowhere to be found, and there’s these mysterious people at the tomb, saying that Jesus is alive from the dead.

And then we're introduced to two of them—two of the larger crew of hundreds of disciples that were there. And they're going away from Jerusalem. Where are they on their way to? A town called Emmaus—just tuck that away—it's extremely important—a village called Emmaus. It's a number of miles—about a day's journey—from Jerusalem.

And what are they talking about on the way? Well, what would *you* be talking about? [Tim laughs] Right? So *you* just sold half your possessions, and spent the last year-and-a-half following this guy around—Jesus, of Nazareth. And you thought he was the “real deal.” You know?

You thought he was the Messiah. And you went with him, went out to Jerusalem for Passover—the most important religious, political holiday of the year for the Jewish people. And you thought it was all going to “hit the fan,” and everything was going to go down. And Jesus said the kingdom of God was right here “at the door,” and he was coming to bring it. And then you go to Jerusalem and what happens to Jesus? He gets arrested, and he gets brutally crucified by the Romans. And this didn't fit any of your categories for what was supposed to happen here.

And so a number of—[Tim grins] then, then it gets even more weird because then some of the other disciples are like, “Yeah, well, the tomb's empty now and it's all very strange.” And two of them are just: “I'm over this.” [Tim laughs] And they pack up—they're going back home. They're not going to stay in Jerusalem. They're leaving, and they're going back home—are you with me?

The fact that Jesus—and we'll see this exactly in what they say—Jesus's death was a shattering tragedy for most of the disciples. It did not make—even though Jesus had been trying to communicate to them [Tim laughs] that it's what was going to happen—they'd had such a different story in their heads about—they had a set of driving assumptions about who Jesus is and what he was going to Jerusalem to do, that when he ended up on the cross, it just . . . everything fell apart.

And so we have two of them. And as they walk along, talking about all of this—about their shattered hopes—who appears walking next to them? This is the center point of the story: the risen Jesus is walking alongside them. And what are they unable to do? Can they see him? Do they see Jesus? You know, they're going to start talking with him. Do they *know* that it's Jesus? So they can see, but they actually *can't* see. Do you get it?

This is a powerful story. And this is one of the most beautiful, artistically told stories in the New Testament about somebody who is walking alongside Jesus, but *cannot* see him. It's as powerful an image as you would want about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus—but actually, truly see and know him.

So something—look at what it says here, in verse 16. Jesus is walking, and as we heard read, it says, “They were kept from recognizing him.” That’s in the New International Version. Some of you read from a different translation. And what does verse 16 say? Not just that they were “kept from recognizing him,” but it mentions their eyes.

Verse 16, “their eyes were kept . . .” In the language Luke’s writing in, in Greek, he mentions their “eyes.” NIV, kind of, paraphrases, and loses the “eye” image, which is unfortunate, because “eyes” are crucial for this whole story. Something *keeps their eyes* from truly recognizing Jesus. They can see that it’s a man, like themselves—a Jewish man, walking along the road with them. But their eyes can’t *really* see what’s going on here. Why?

So Jesus asks—this whole story is full of irony— [Tim laughs], right? Jesus asks: “What are you guys talking about?” And then they stop, and their face is downcast. And then a guy—we find out one of the names—Cleopas, said, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem? You have no clue what just happened over the weekend? You don’t know what happened?” [Tim grins] And the irony is so thick, you can cut it with a knife, right? Of course, not only does Jesus *know* about what happened, he *is* what happened [Tim laughs]—right? And they don’t know it.

“What things?” Jesus asks. “What? What—I don’t know, what?” “Jesus of Nazareth”—and then, look at their depiction of him—“Jesus of Nazareth—listen, he was a prophet. He was powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. And the chief priests and our rulers, they killed him. They handed him over to be sentenced to death. He was crucified. And then”—wait for it, here it is—“we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” Let’s just stop right there.

So they’ve just showed their hand—[Tim laughs] right? So they don’t know it, but you know it as the reader, and as Jesus is going to focus on, they just exposed what is blinding them. Do you see that—for them, Jesus’s crucifixion is not a victory. Do you see that? For them, Jesus’s crucifixion shattered everything that they hoped for. They thought Jesus was a prophet—that he was going to redeem Israel through his powerful words and deeds.

And then the cross ends up being this tragic destruction of their hopes and everything that they thought. Nobody saw this coming—even though Jesus tried to communicate it to them. It was so outside—the crucified Messiah was so outside of what they thought the Messiah was supposed to be.

And here’s a great example—the language here is so loaded, here. Because in reality, does Jesus think that he redeemed Israel by dying on the cross—does Jesus think that? As we’ll see here, yes. So exactly the thing that they think makes Jesus a failure is, in

the story of the Gospel, the thing that made Jesus the victorious Messiah. Why do they think that Jesus's death is his failure to redeem Israel?

And so part of this—we have to do a little homework on this word “redemption,” which is, you know, as good a religious word as you could ever want, you guys. It's one of those, I think, in our—I mean, we have movies named after the word, for goodness sakes, right? It's kind of this—I don't know, what do you think “redemption” means? What comes to your mind when you hear the word “redeem” or “redemption”?

You can redeem, I guess you can redeem, like, tickets or coupons or something like that, down at Oaks Park, right? You play a bunch of Skee-Ball—you're one of those people [Tim laughs], right? You play a bunch of Skee-Ball, and then you redeem your tickets to get the teddy bear, or whatever, that's going to fall apart in two weeks. We use the word “redeem” for that: to, like, “buy something.”

But more often, that word “redemption”—it's this, kind of, broad word, to talk about when something tragic or horrible or sad gets transformed into something good and beautiful. That's my read on how we use the word “redemption.” What do you guys think? Yeah, there you go. So whatever—pick the movie or book that has the word in the title.

So that word “redemption,” though, has a really, really specific meaning and origin in the Bible. And this is a really fun trivia fact to know—use it at a party this Friday night, I don't know. Where in the story of the Bible does the word “redemption” appear, for the first time? If you start on page one? The book of Exodus. And this is right before Moses goes to Pharaoh and, you've seen the movie—“Let my people go”—that whole business.

Here's the first appearance of the word “redemption” in the Bible: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘I've heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I've remembered my covenant promise. So say to the Israelites, “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I'll be your God.”’”

The first time that the word “redemption” appears in the Bible, it's in a story about the liberation of slaves—from oppression into the freedom of becoming God's people. That's what “redemption” means—it means God does something to purchase and liberate slaves and then make them into his own free, liberated people. It's the meaning of the word “redemption” in the Bible.

And so, just map the story on—here it is. If you know the story—ten plagues—Pharaoh gets tromped on, and so on—parting the Red Sea. So when two Jewish men have their hopes—that there's going to be a Messiah in the first century—who's going to redeem Israel, what does that mean? Because for these two, Jesus's death is a tragic fate that

means redemption is not going to happen—at least not through Jesus. What does it mean? Well, what's the Exodus story? I mean, who are the Egyptians in the days of these two, right here? Who's the oppressor of Israel in Jesus's day? So it's the Romans, the Romans. And who's "Pharaoh" in Jesus's day? This guy named "Caesar Augustus."

And then he has a crony, puppet guy in Jerusalem—what's his name? He had Jesus executed. His name's Pilate. It's very clear—it's very, very clear how this story works. If there's a Messiah, and he's going to "redeem"—pull an "Exodus move" here—then he's going to tromp on Pharaoh and destroy the Romans. That's how this story works. I mean, it was Passover weekend, for goodness sakes. And what story does Passover retell every year? This story, the Exodus story.

So I'm trying to sympathize with these two for a minute—[Tim grins] like, really sympathize: you've grown up under the thumb of Roman oppression, and Jesus comes around saying, "the Kingdom of God is here"—it all leads up to a climactic weekend retelling the redemption story in Jerusalem—and then he's crucified. How do you feel about your life, if you're these two?

There's one more piece to this that, when it was pointed out to me, all the dots came together for this story right here. Where are these two going? They're traveling away from Jerusalem. They've packed up, and they're going—to what town again? Do you remember? Emmaus.

Now, biblical authors, when they tell you stories, they're very sparing in detail—very sparing. They don't mention all kinds of things that we wish they did mention. For example, Jesus's physical appearance is never described anywhere in the Bible, which is why Warner Sallman could sell five hundred million of those, [Tim laughs] right?

So when the biblical authors do give you what seems like random information, pay attention because it matters. They're telling it to you because it matters. They're going to a town called Emmaus. Why does Luke tell you that? So to—in Luke's audience—if I were to say, "My wife and I wanted to learn more about the history of the U.S. and the World War, so we took a trip to Pearl Harbor." That's all I have to say: "We went to visit Pearl Harbor." And what story is immediately in your mind? Of course, the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Or you're doing a U.S. history tour: "We went to Gettysburg." Why would somebody go to Gettysburg? You get the idea here?

So when Luke says, "Yeah, there were two disciples of Jesus going to *Emmaus*," it's—exactly—do you know Emmaus? You know the story—[Tim laughs] right? Clearly, you know the story—the famous battle of Emmaus? [Tim grins] You don't know the story? Okay, you didn't grow up in first-century Jewish culture, that's why.

So if you did, you would know the story—and here it is. This is one hundred and fifty years before Jesus—it's not the Romans on the scene, it's the Syrians. And they're led

by a general named Gorgias, we're going to see. And there was a Jewish uprising against the Syrians, led by a family known as "the Hammer," the Hammers—or in Hebrew, the Maccabees. And one particular guy, Judah, or Judas Maccabee, led the Jewish people into the Battle of Emmaus.

And here's the story in short: "And now the Syrian general, Gorgias, he took 5,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry"—total: one and five thousand—six—"to attack the camp of the Jewish people and strike them suddenly. But Judas"—that is Judas, the Hammer, the Maccabee—"he heard of it, and he and his warriors moved out to attack the forces in Emmaus. At daybreak, Judas appeared in the plain with 3,000 men."

Do the math: 3,000 versus—it's not 300—3,000—so two-to-one. It's bad odds. "As they saw the camp of the Gentiles"—the non-Jewish people, the Syrians—"strong and fortified with cavalry all around it, Judas said to those who were with him"—and this is one of these classic battle stories, with the rousing speech before the war—"Don't fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. Remember how our ancestors were saved at the Red Sea when Pharaoh and his forces pursued them. So now let us cry out to Heaven, to see whether God will favor us, and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this heathen army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel."

So you have two first-century Jewish men who are raised on these stories—the stories of the Exodus, redemption—the stories of Judas Maccabee's victory one hundred and fifty years ago—all about redemption. And you encounter Jesus of Nazareth, and he's going around saying, "God's kingdom and rule is here," and "God is actually the king of this world, not Caesar Augustus." And he starts forming momentum in all of these followers.

[Tim grins] He appoints *twelve* leaders of this movement—right?—this renewal of the people of Israel. And then he heads, with his whole crew, to Jerusalem for Passover. And they're singing and hailing him as the Messiah. And you are hoping that he is going to redeem Israel. What's the story in your head—I'm just trying to paint the picture for you—what story is—what is Jesus going to do—in your head—if you're one of these two?

[Tim grins] First item of business upon arriving in Jerusalem: *kill a lot of Romans*, [Tim laughs] right? Go, like, attack a storehouse—get a whole bunch of spears and swords. You're going to go right to the main fortress in Jerusalem, called the Antonia Fortress—they built a fortress to overlook the temple, so that if anything ever went wrong in the temple, Roman archers could just start picking off people with bows and arrows from the tower. So we're going to storm the Antonia—I mean, this is how it works. This is how you "redeem" a people.

But apparently Jesus has a very different vision of what that word means, doesn't he? And Jesus was very inspired by the Exodus story. And he really did believe that a new Exodus moment was about to happen in Jerusalem, but it would not involve him killing anybody. It would involve him *being* killed.

And apparently they weren't listening when Jesus was talking about that on any given day. Apparently these two missed out on the strange, very difficult-to-hear teachings of Jesus, like this, from earlier in Luke 6. Here's something Jesus said one day—Luke says he was on a plain, giving a teaching—Jesus said, “But I say to you who are listening, love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also.

“Whoever takes away your coat, don't withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you; whoever takes away what's yours, don't demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. Now, if you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Everybody does that—even sinners do that to those who love them. But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great. You will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and to evil people.”

Now, I'm not here to defend Jesus, and this teaching of Jesus opens up a million cans of worms—I understand that. But I think that's precisely what Jesus meant to do when he said these words, is open a million cans of worms. Jesus has a vision of what it means to be a human being who follows him, and who lives under God's reign; that's a very different way of life than most humans have ever dreamt of.

Jesus has this idea that the way that evil is truly confronted and defeated is by doing good—by suffering, sacrificial love. Jesus—these weren't just words to Jesus. He said, “This is how you live under God's reign, under God's kingdom.” And he said that's what he was here to bring. And then he goes into Jerusalem, and he walks his talk, doesn't he? I mean, Jesus actually believed that he would conquer and defeat evil by letting evil defeat him.

Did Jesus believe that he was redeeming Israel when he was being crucified by the Romans? Yes, he did. And that's what he was trying to tell the disciples the night before, after he got arrested, right? Because he said, “Listen, we're here for Passover”—it's a Passover meal, and—do you remember?—he takes the cup, and he breaks the bread, and he takes these symbols of the Exodus story, and he reshapes them around what's going to happen: that they point to his broken body and to his shed blood.

And Jesus did believe that he was going to accomplish and do Exodus, and he was going to do it not by becoming Moses—[Tim laughs] who's going to tromp on Pharaoh—he's going to do it by becoming the lamb, the lamb of the Passover meal.

I don't care how long you've heard the story, right? Every time you hear it, and you see what Jesus was actually saying, most of his followers—if we're honest with ourselves, go, "What? Like this doesn't make any sense at all." This is about as crazy as saying something like, "If you really want to save your life, you'll lose it. And if you really want to be the most influential person around, you'll go to the bottom and become a slave to everyone." We, kind of, sanitize that verse by using the word "servant," but the word that Jesus used has all the connotations that our word has of that name, "slave." Like Jesus had a totally upside-down view of the world.

And somehow his disciples, as they come into Jerusalem with him, they are walking into Jerusalem with Sallman's "Head of Christ." It's a very peaceful, kind, handsome Jesus who, you know, calls them to "love," and stuff like that, but who's never actually going to mess with you, right? He's never actually going to overturn everything you believe and thought about yourself in the world. Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ" is too nice to do that to you, [Tim laughs] right? But the real Jesus, like, he will bother you—just like he bothered these disciples. And what he actually is all about will always perpetually shatter everything I thought I knew about him.

And so I think, what Luke's inviting us to do here is to see ourselves in these two. It's asking ourselves, like, "What pre-loaded assumptions do I have as I walk alongside Jesus that actually prevent me from really seeing? Is it possible that I could journey alongside Jesus as a disciple and never actually, truly see the real Jesus?" And this story says: "It's absolutely possible." In fact, it's been the experience of every disciple [Tim laughs] of Jesus since the very beginning—like, he's that counterintuitive.

This story—I'm telling you—how does this resolve? How do they come to see Jesus? The two go on to say, "In addition, not only did Jesus die, but this has gotten even more weird. These other disciples—the women, Peter—they can't find his body. The tomb's empty." Then Jesus said to them, verse 25, "Fools, fools—how slow you are to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

And there's another translation issue here. This is the New International Version, "slow to believe." I mean, some of you have a different translation—what does it say? It keeps a good Hebrew, Jewish idiom right there for you: *slow of heart*—"slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into his glory? And then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all of the Scriptures concerning himself."

And when he finishes this little, on-the-road Bible study with them, they *still* don't recognize him. So notice, Jesus isolates what he thinks the problem is. He says: it's their hearts. It's not even that they don't have the correct information about Jesus. It's that their hearts—their, like, their core value system, their commitments—their desires—are so loaded with assumptions about Jesus that are not true, even though they were with him in person. They had no clue of who he actually was.

And so he takes them through the Scriptures. And here—oh, to be a fly—well, they're walking on the road, so you can't be “a fly on the wall,” but a fly on the road, right? To like—what did Jesus talk about? What Scriptures did he take them to? He's walking them through the story of the Bible. And it's this story that begins by saying all humanity is hopelessly caught in this web—not just the heathen Gentiles, not just Israel—everybody—like, *everybody*. We're caught in this never-ending cycle of looking out for the best of me and my tribe, even if that's at the expense of you and your tribe.

And we're all contributors to it, in different ways—whether it's Judas Maccabee, whether it's Gorgias, whether it's Caesar Augustus or Pilate—like, the whole—it's all of us. We're all—we have met the enemy, and *he is* [Tim laughs] *us*. That's the Bible's view of the human condition. They have this view of the human condition that God is pro-*us*—in this case that is: our tribe, Israel—and anti-our enemy—who is, of course, God's enemy—that is: the Romans.

And the story of the Scriptures just obliterates that kind of black-and-white view of thinking—just assuming that God's on “my side” and therefore Jesus is on “my side.” If the prophets—go read the prophets and they'll—like in Amos—and he'll say, “You think God's for you while you neglect the poor here in Jerusalem? God's coming for you. And it'll be—here's what it'll be like. It'll be like: you run away from a lion in the field, and then you meet a bear. And then you run away from the bear, and you run into your house, and you think you're safe, until you put an arm up on the wall and a snake comes out of the wall and bites you.”

That's what Amos says: God's not for you, while you neglect to live up to the covenant calling that he called you to be. God will hold his own people accountable to the same standards of justice and love that he holds all of humanity accountable for. Jesus walks them through this story.

And then what he walks them through is the surprising reality—and it peeks out at key moments in the story of the Hebrew Scriptures—that the ultimate way that God was going to confront and defeat evil was through the suffering death of the messianic servant-king. Isaiah 53, Zechariah 11, Genesis 3, 15—that God's ultimate purpose was actually not to destroy his enemy, but to die for his enemy. And that's where this story's always been heading, according to Jesus—that in Jesus, God binds himself to the

human condition. And that the death of Jesus is not a tragedy—it's actually the way that humanity is redeemed.

It's by Jesus taking into himself all of the consequences of our selfishness and sin—and the train wreck of human history—and he allows it to defeat him so that he can defeat it through his resurrection from the dead. "Loving your enemies" is really bad advice if Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Are you with me? "Loving your enemies" is horrible—because your enemy will kill you, and then you're just dead. And you lose.

But in Jesus's view, "loving your enemy" is actually the only way to win. If your hope is in a God who himself overcame evil and death by conquering it with his love and resurrection life—are you with me? If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, this is all a sham—you should go golfing, and I'll go skateboarding right now. [Tim laughs] You know what I'm saying, right? This is ridiculous—why we're here.

But if Jesus did rise from the dead, then everything I thought I knew about the world, I have to rethink. And everything I thought I knew about myself, I have to rethink. Everything I thought I knew about God and Jesus, I have to let it be rebuilt by the resurrection.

Now watch where this all goes. Even after the Bible study, they still don't see Jesus. So they finally get to Emmaus, where they're going, and "Jesus continued on, as if he were going farther." It's wonderful—"No, really. I have to go, see a man about a horse," or something, I don't know, right? And then they looked at him, they're like, "No, come on—stay with us—have dinner." "No, really—I need to be going, and . . . oh, okay, all right." It's wonderful.

So he goes in, and they have dinner. Here it is: "When he was at the table with them, he took the bread." He's being hosted by someone else, but he takes the lead. "He takes the bread. He gives thanks for it. He breaks it, and he gives it to them."

Now just stop right there. He took the bread. He gives thanks for it. He breaks it and gives it to his disciples. Anybody? Come now. Come now—do you get it? All right, turn two pages backward, and you'll discover: when's the last time Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples? It's the Passover meal, that happened hours before he got arrested.

He took the bread, he gave thanks for it, he broke it—the symbols that he gave his disciples to eat, and internalize the story of his broken body and shed blood—he gives it to them, "then their eyes were opened; then they recognized him," and he disappears. [Tim laughs] And they're like, "Oh my gosh." And then they go tell all of the others, and then Jesus appears later again.

But let's just—right there—we'll focus right there. It's only when a disciple of Jesus humbles themselves and checks all their baggage—checks everything they thought they knew about Jesus and the world and themselves—and they allow the scandal of the cross, the scandal of the crucified God, to come to us, personally, and give us himself—and precisely these sacred symbols, right—it's what we do at the culmination of every Sunday gathering is: we take the bread and the cup, and it becomes such a ritual for us that we stop thinking about it.

But this is the heartbeat of the whole story. It's: God defeats evil and sin—God confronts his enemy by dying for his enemy—and that's so scandalous. It's so scandalous. I mean, do I even need to bring up the outpouring of hatred and vengeance that's happening right now in our culture towards our enemy? Who is our enemy? Go ask your neighbor who your enemy is. It's very clearly ISIS—and Paul the Apostle would say, “Fools, fools—ISIS is not our enemy. There is a deeper, more mysterious form of evil at work in humanity that has tricked us all into thinking that we win when we kill each other.”

And the scandal of the crucifixion of Jesus is telling us something about ourselves, something about God—sorry, I wasn't going to bring up ISIS, but how can I not? Are you with me? Like there's something so powerful about the crucifixion of Jesus. We assume that God is “for us” and “against my enemy.” And the story of the Scriptures is exposing how shallow and superficial that thinking is—as if I am not the enemy.

We have met the enemy—says the story of the Bible—and it is us. And we're all contributors to why this world is the way that it is. And the Good News that we come around, in the bread and the cup, is that God loves his enemy, and that he will defeat evil and sin in our world, precisely through suffering, self-giving love.

Now, what that is supposed to look like on the ground, in day-to-day life and in our politics, may God help us. May God help us and guide us by his Spirit as we figure that one out. But we should have no mistake of who Jesus thinks the enemy is—and it's not another human. It's an evil—a spiritual evil that lurks much deeper, and that's much darker, and that's in every single one of us.

And so we come together to celebrate Good News. The disciples of Jesus, for 2,000 years, have had this strange idea that, when Jesus walked out of that tomb with a resurrection body—empowered and recreated by God's own life and love and spirit—and that gives us—it's the prototype of our hope for ourselves, for the universe, for those who will humble themselves before Jesus and follow him.

We can look at the tragedies of the last few weeks, name them for what they are: they're evil, and stubbornly believe there is still Good News to be had in this world—amen? That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus. That's what it means to believe

that the resurrection opened up a new day—a new day for humanity, and a new day for my vision of myself.

And so that's where I'm going to land the plane, as we come to take the bread and the cup today. I don't know what your story is that you brought in today. I don't know what habits or patterns of behavior, or ways of thinking that are at work in you. I'm not sure I even know what are the ones that work in me, that blind me from seeing Jesus. But God have mercy on us. And as we confess, and we name our failures, and we bring them to the bread and the cup today, may our eyes be open to see who Jesus truly is. Amen?

[Musical break (47:40–47:44)]

All right, you guys, thanks for listening to “Exploring My Strange Bible” podcast. There's going to be four more episodes in this series exploring really important New Testament passages about the resurrection and the new creation. And so keep listening if this is helpful.

[EMSB theme fades in]

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[EMSB theme fades out]