

# Burning Hearts

Luke 24:13-35

## Introduction

I have acid reflux. Even though I take medicine for it, there are still some foods I must avoid. I really shouldn't eat after 6:00 PM. The medicine I take must precede breakfast and supper by half an hour. If I violate any of these rules, I can expect to have my sleep interrupted with a bad case of heartburn, or as I have come to call it, an acid attack. Even with Tums or baking soda, it may not be safe to lie down for up to two hours. It takes that long to get the taste out of your mouth, the burning sensation out of your throat, and the feeling like the acid will return if you lie down. A case of heartburn like that grabs ahold of you and it's all you can think about. This is what comes to my mind when I hear the disciples say, "*Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?*" (**Luke 24:32**). What was their "heartburn" like?

## Kindle, Consume

The Greek word here means to kindle or consume with fire, either literally or metaphorically. I have to say, that's a pretty good description of heartburn. But what would this mean when applied to the disciples on the road to Emmaus? There was something about the Scripture when Jesus opened it to them that was consuming to them, that made their hearts burn.

## An Old Testament Example – Jeremiah 20:7-9

(Read **Jeremiah 20:7-11**) God has commanded Jeremiah to be His prophet. But Jeremiah's prophecy is unpopular to say the least. So, to save himself some grief, Jeremiah decides he isn't going to prophesy any longer. But this doesn't work. The Word burns within him until he can stand it no longer and speaks out. When he does, he realizes that his enemies will be destroyed, not him. The Lord is a  *dread warrior* on his side (**Jeremiah 20:11**).

## The Fire of Scripture

What causes the fire is the Word of God when it is in us. As Ambrose said: *This fire the Lord Jesus sent upon the earth. Faith shone bright, devotion was enkindled, love was illuminated, and justice was resplendent. With this fire He inflamed the hearts of His apostles (Isaac, or the Soul 8.77).*

## The Flame of Life

Lutheran Reformer, Johann Spangenberg said: *Here we can see what the holy Scripture is capable of doing: it can take the listeners who are weak in faith, cold in love fainthearted in hope, and wonderfully inflame, comfort, and strengthen them (Gospel on Easter Monday).* This is not mere excitement; it's not an emotion. This burning is a desire and a drive within that motivates us to live. This burning is an act of grace.

## Christ Opens the Scripture

But it's not just the Scriptures, it is Christ opening the Scriptures. As Origen says: *It is [Christ] who "opening the Scriptures" kindles the hearts of the disciples (Homilies on Exodus 12.4)*. The disciples would have been familiar with these Scriptures. They hadn't had this effect on them before, but Jesus opens them in a way that causes them to burn within their hearts. They weren't just listening to the Scriptures being read. Jesus, the Son of God, and Author of them was telling the disciples what they meant. By opening the Scriptures to them, He was explaining them in a way they had never heard before. They were being stirred up, but stirred up to what?

## Revealed in the Bread

Their hearts may have been burning, but they didn't know what to do about it. They invited Jesus to stay with them for supper. When He broke the bread, their *eyes were opened, and they recognized Him (v. 31)*. What was it that caused them to recognize Jesus? They had seen Jesus break bread many times before. One time, it was in a solitary place on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus fed 5,000 people (**Matthew 14:13-21**). Another time, on a lonely mountainside, where He fed 4,000 (**Matthew 15:32-38**). But the time that figures most prominently is just last Thursday evening. They weren't in the chosen twelve, but they most likely were in the upper room for the last supper, because it probably held from 120 to 150 people and these two were in the seventy-two that Jesus had sent out (**Luke 10:1**).

## He Disappeared

As soon as they recognized Him, Jesus vanished. He didn't need to stick around. His purpose for appearing was to teach them and get them to believe. Now that they had faith, His mission was accomplished.

## "We Have Seen the Lord!"

As soon as Jesus left, they returned to Jerusalem to tell the others what happened, to give them the good news that Jesus is alive. They needed the Word to be catechized with and they needed to have their eyes opened in the breaking of the bread. Then they could do what the Lord wanted them to do. That is why, when we gather for worship, we have Word and Sacrament. We are instructed by Christ when He opens the Word to us and our eyes are opened in the breaking of the bread, when we receive His body and blood.

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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