

JESUS.COM

Why Invest in the Company of Jesus?

Text: Luke 24:13-32

Next Series (Part 1)

Starting with Huge Hopes

I have a few friends who have been through some pretty big changes in recent years. Attracted by the fresh exuberance of Silicon Valley and the loosening up of private equity markets, some of my buddies left fairly stable jobs with major companies to sign on with one of the newer dot-com's. For awhile, they felt like they owned a piece of heaven. They were on the inside track of the tech economy and the fast-track to the good life. Working ungodly hours for limited pay didn't seem so bad when the stock options could mean such staggering rewards. But, as you know, not every company turns out to be Apple or Google. Some of my friends saw their bubbles burst. Others bailed out or are still trying to. All of them are much more sober today.

When we meet them on the road to Emmaus just after Easter, Cleopas and his unnamed companion were a bit like my friends. We know precious little about these two individuals, save for the fact that they appear to have been part of the wider circle of people who had invested themselves heavily in Jesus.Com. Within three years, the company around Christ had exploded from a handful of Galileans to literally thousands of people. Christ's name was everywhere, His ideas were spreading. Even His critics could do nothing to slow the fascination with anything "Jesus."

Except for a free meal now and then, the material pay for those who followed Jesus was almost nothing. The draw for many seems to have been the excitement of the work environment and, of course, the amazing "options." Word on the street was that this start-up from Nazareth was THE "next big thing." He had some kind of unusual spiritual technology that could do wonders in healthcare, foodservice, and psychiatry. His program was the "killer app" that would overturn the market domination of Rome.

After three years in research and development, Jesus was now heading to Jerusalem to take the company public. Christ's early employees felt certain that their stock was about to soar. They'd finally see the pay-day for which they'd worked so hard. In the words of Cleopas: **"We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel"** (Luke 24:1a).

Facing the Bubble Burst

But then the bubble burst. On the eve of the big roll-out, Christ's forecasts had

turned amazingly depressing. He talked about suffering and dying and redemption of a very different kind than his disciples expected. Hearing this, some of his followers immediately cashed in their options and left while they still could. Tons of the new investors who'd hailed the company on Palm Sunday now turned against Christ. The vultures on the Ruling Council, who'd been so critical for so long, now went for blood. The company broke up. Jesus was crucified. The lights went out.

Cleopas shook his head again in disappointment. He was telling all this to the Stranger who'd come alongside him and his friend as they walked from Jerusalem on the road toward Emmaus. "I'm surprised you haven't heard this news," he said. "You must be the only visitor to Jerusalem who hasn't. Anyway, it's been three days now **"since all this took place."** It's amazing, but some of the female employees still haven't given up. **"They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said Jesus was alive,** that He'd managed a turnaround. I wish it were true. It really did look like it was going to be the good life finally -- like Jesus might be the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21-23).

Around Eastertime each year, a lot of Cleopases find their way into a Church. Maybe you're one of them. Like the crowd who showed up at the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover long ago, some of us come mainly for the big cultural celebration. It's what lots of people are doing, or what we've been taught to do, or simply dragged along for. But part of us sort of wonders still: Could this year be different? Might this be the time when God rolls out something new? Something that makes stock in Christ's company really worth owning?

Perhaps you showed up here last weekend looking for nothing so radical as "redemption." But you were open to something that might "upgrade" your life in some meaningful way. Maybe you came back or are tuning in today in the hope that this help might just be found right here. After all, the Bible offers moral precepts that are healthy for us and our families. The Church appears to do some helpful things for the needy. There are opportunities here to network. The music is lovely. The employees were kind. Maybe I'll invest a bit more and come back next week." Then the bubble wears thin.

Some of you have heard the story of the little boy who, while waiting in line after worship, spied a wall on which were inscribed the names of all the people from that church who had perished in past wars. When it came his turn to greet the pastor, the boy asked what all those names were. The Pastor replied: "Those are the names of all those who died in service. The little boy said: "Was that at the Saturday night or Sunday morning service?"

Maybe, like that child, you come to a service after Easter and find it a bit dead. Or you start to think: "You know, I tried this Jesus business before and it didn't

really protect me from that pain or loss I suffered. I prayed hard, but God didn't give me what I requested. I went to Church and it didn't advance my career or love life the way I expected. In other words, I bought a few shares in Jesus.com and they didn't go up. For a moment, I had hoped Christ and his Company would be the one to help me to the good life. It must have just been irrational exuberance.

Investing in a Better Deal

You want to know something? It's not irrational at all. It's just a simple misreading of the Corporate Mission statement. Jesus never said: "I'll help you to what the world defines as the good life." Jesus said instead: "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. I'll help you develop a life that is good." Well, what kind of life is that, you may wonder? Let me give you the straight truth.

First of all, Jesus offers you not a dead religion but a living relationship with God. If you get to know Him more deeply, you will not be merely discovering a moral man or a great teacher. You will be connecting with "**the Alpha and the Omega**" himself -- the One who brought you into this life in the first place and who will be there when you go out the door (Rev 22:13).

Secondly, Jesus will not ensure you an easy or pothole-free road in life. But He will give you his guiding companionship every step of the journey. Even through the wilderness, He will be "**the Way, the Truth, and the Life**" that gets you home (John 14:6).

Thirdly, Jesus will challenge you to abandon the acquisition and adornment mindset by which the world measures wealth and pursue true fruitfulness instead. Because He is "**the true Vine**" of life, if you remain engrafted into Him, Christ will grow in you a richer measure of that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control, that are the fruit of His own character (John 15:5; Galatians 5:22-23).

Fourth, Jesus will not promise that you'll never want for something to put in your fridge. But he will provide the deep fulfillment that fills up the restless hunger of your soul. He is "**the Bread of Life**" (John 6:35ab) without whom you and I can never truly be full in the way we most need.

Fifthly, Jesus will not give you all the answers you want at times. But he will give you the clear vision you need to keep you from overly treasuring the trash the world is constantly trying to sell you or trashing the treasures you may already have. Because he is "**the Light of the World**," he can help you see what truly matters and stay clear about that (John 8:12).

Sixthly, Jesus will stop you from being duped into believing that it is safe for

you to wander wherever you choose in life. He knows too much about the dangerous paths and cliffs that lie out there for people. Instead, Christ will offer you entrance into God's care and protection, if you are willing to come. He offers Himself as the **"Gate for the Sheep"** (John 10:7).

Finally, Jesus will not ensure that your life is never touched by the wolves of evil. But He went to the Cross to guarantee your final deliverance from sin and death. Christ is **"the Good Shepherd"** who loves you so much that he became the sacrificial lamb in order that you could have eternal life (John 10:11).

How To Get A Piece Of This Company

On that Easter morning, Cleopas and his friend were only beginning to learn these things. For as yet they did not understand that Jesus was truly **"the Resurrection and the Life"** -- the power of everlasting life meeting them in his risen glory (John 11:25). But they were soon to know better.

A few things particularly stand out about the WAY they learned that I think are especially worth noting for yourself. Cleopas and the other disciple might have missed the glory altogether if they had not done certain things NEXT... The Bible says that they invited Christ to stay with them; they broke bread in fellowship together; and they journeyed long enough with Him for him to open up the meaning of the Scriptures.

If you want the life-changing love of Jesus Christ to bring forth all the good in your life that he can, then make sure those three actions are part of what you do NEXT too.

FIRST, invite Jesus Christ to come in and stay with you. The Risen Lord will not force himself upon anyone. **"Behold... I stand at the door and knock"** says Jesus. **"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in"** and share life with them (Rev 3:20). Invite Jesus to stay with you and be at the center of your heart and household as you journey forward.

SECONDLY, involve yourself more fully in fellowship with other believers. Jesus said it is when **"two or more of you are gathered in my name that I am with you"** (Matt 18:20).

FINALLY, invest yourself more deeply in the study of the Scriptures than you are doing at present. Do it until your heart burns with the light and warmth of Christ's own Word speaking to you and in you and through you (Luke 24:32). Your local church can help you get into a Bible study or find a great personal study guide, if you just ask.

We keep trying to reduce Christianity to just one of the companies in a

diversified portfolio aimed at establishing for ourselves and our children “the good life.” What I pray we will all grasp more fully today is that Easter isn’t really about Jesus.Com at all. It is about the Eternal Lord offering us His company in the deepest sense. He is offering you and me a moment-by-moment communion with Himself – in order to give us “a life that is good.” Do you want this Life? asks Jesus. Then COME unto me and I will give you rest – the rest for you and the rest of Me you seek (Matt 11:28).

PAGE 1

PAGE 4

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