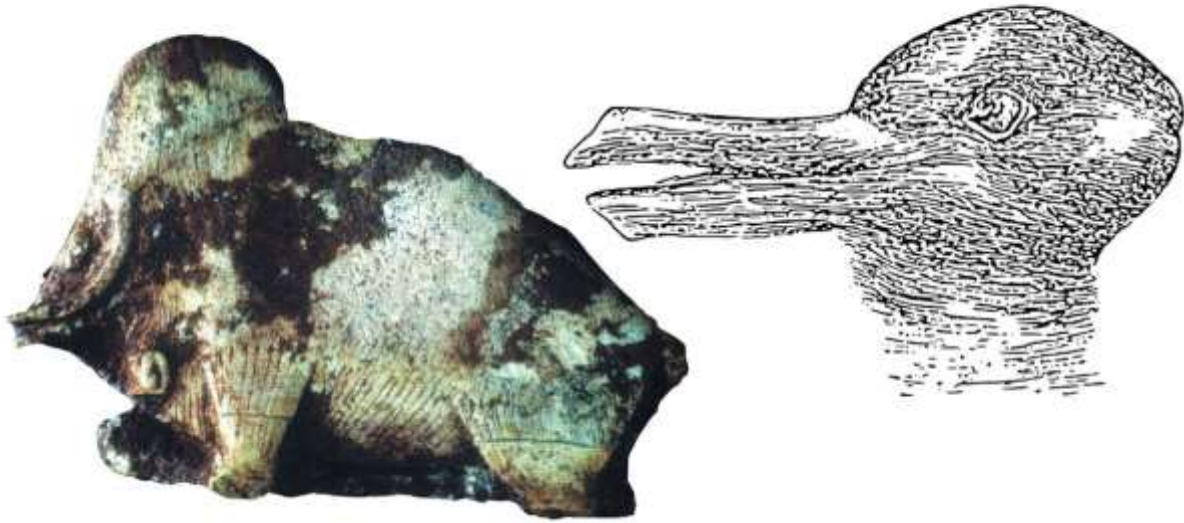


“OPENED MINDS”

Luke 24 36-49



What do you see in these two pictures? It all depends on what you are looking for.

The “Napoleon” movie came out and depicted his greatest triumph at the Battle of Austerlitz. One of the reasons for his success is that the two main armies opposing him were from Austria and Russia. They agreed to meet up at a set date. But when that date came, only the Austrians were there. They thought the Russians had betrayed them. But the problem is that the date meant two different things to both armies because the Austrians were using our modern Gregorian calendar and the Russians were using the older Julian one. So the Russian army came two weeks later, the right date on their calendar.

So it was with how people looked at God’s promises. To Jesus’ disciples Jews like them, they thought God’s promises would mean that God would raise up a new King David, start a revolution to overthrow the Romans, and then rule over the Jews in Palestine as the new Israel. What had been lost in the Old Testament would be restored.

Jesus seemed to mess that up when he allowed Himself to be arrested and crucified. How could He be the New David if He was dead? Then this news came that Jesus was alive. Was this true? What did this mean?

A woman complained that a grocery store was selling “lion” meat. How could they do that? Well they could if you know that what the woman thought was “lion” was actually “loin.”

Jesus told the disciples that they too were looking at things the wrong way. Jesus had told them several times before He died that He would be betrayed, killed, and then arise from the dead. It was not that they didn’t hear Him. It was not that they completely forgot. It was just that it didn’t fit into what they thought should happen.

How do we view what is supposed to happen? In college there is so much concentration on getting a degree to become marketable for a high paying job. That way you can afford a new car, pay off student loans, buy a house, and provide for a family. As you work you view how you can keep up with the pressures at work and save up for a comfortable retirement. As you get older you hope you can keep your health to do those things you were too busy to do earlier in life. But do we expect to be guided by what God has in store for us and by our own plans?

Because of what the disciples as Jews of their time were expecting, the cross made no sense to them. Jesus' death was a sidetrack, an unfortunate bump in the road. Now they could get on to what was supposed to happen—Jesus starting the revolution to overthrow the Romans and restore the nation of Israel.

That is an opinion held by many Jews and others today. Israel's destiny is to become an independent nation in Palestine where Jews can live in freedom. We can argue over what should be done in international politics over whether or not the state of Israel should exist. That is for modern people to discuss. But we can't use the argument that they should have it because of God's promises in the Old Testament. God did give the Holy Land to those He led out of Egypt into the Promised Land. He did raise up kings like David to rule over them. But because they forsook God to worship idols, He sent in other nations to destroy and put them into exile. Yes, God did promise to restore Israel. But we have to see what it means today to talk about "Israel," "God's people," and "Jerusalem," according to the Bible.

Telescopes enable us to see what we cannot with the naked eye. The planets Uranus, Neptune, and Mercury were only discovered, like the moons of Jupiter and the rings of Saturn by telescopes. We tend to think that the main purpose of these telescopes is to make things bigger. But just as important is their ability to concentrate light so those things are not only big enough, but have enough light coming to our eyes to see them.

Jesus is our "telescope" to the Scriptures. Jesus met the disciples after He rose and talked to them. Luke tells us "He opened their eyes to the Scriptures." He turned their way of seeing it from what they were expecting to what was determined. The key to it is Jesus Himself. If they did not look at the Old Testament through the "glasses" of Jesus they would get it wrong. In Jesus they could see that the "Israel" God was talking about was not a physical nation made up of physical descendants of Abraham, but a spiritual kingdom, the Church, made up of those who are spiritual descendants of Abraham. "Jerusalem" is not a city in the Middle East, but the Church. A few weeks ago we were told that when Jesus cleared the temple He said, "Destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days." His disciples did not know at that time what He meant, but after Jesus rose they did understand. They saw that the "temple" was not a building in Jerusalem, but Jesus Himself who died and was raised in three days.

People have all kinds of interpretations of what the Bible says. That is what led the Roman Catholic church to say that only the official church can interpret what it says and led them for centuries to not allow it to be translated into the languages that the common people

could read. All kinds of Christian denominations read the same Bible, but have different views. What are we to do with that?

Again, we have to go back to Jesus, who “opened the mind of the disciples.” We don’t just look at the Bible with just a blank state of mind. No, we look at it through the “glasses” of Jesus. So our clear focus is not on how good we can be, but how loving our Savior is. Everything else comes from that. That becomes the basis for our hope, for how we live out our lives, for what we share with others. For through Jesus our minds are truly opened.