

Chapter 92

On the road to Emmaus

Mark 16 vv 12 and 13

Luke 24 vv 13 and 14

To the North East of Jerusalem lies the little village of Emmaus. In the Bible it says that it lay at about sixty furlongs away from Jerusalem. According to most authorities the distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus was about two and a half hours' walk.

Look, that same afternoon two men leave the city and set off in the direction of Emmaus. No, they do not appear happy and cheerful. Just look at their faces. Do you not see the sad mournful look upon their faces? ... Can you not hear the despondent sound which their voices betray? ... Their whole appearance is one of dejection.

Who are these men? ... Oh, I need not tell you that, for you already know, don't you? ... They are the two who could no longer endure it with the disciples and the women, and who had gone out.

Oh, how sad! All is lost. Jesus is dead and remains dead. Of course! There is nothing that can be done about it. It is all over for good.

When the women and Mary Magdalene came in and brought them the joyful news that Jesus lived, yes when they said that they had seen Him, then they too had shaken their heads in disbelief. Oh, no that could not be true. The women have deceived themselves. If what they related was true, then why had Peter and John seen nothing? They had also been to look. Well,

yes the grave was empty that is true, but if angels had been there, then surely the two disciples would have seen them? They were rather annoyed by the women.

At last they could endure it there no longer. The joy of the women irritates them. They get up crossly and leave. They do not want to remain there any longer. They don't want to hear any more of that "talk".

Now they are outside Jerusalem walking on the road to Emmaus and they are communing with each other and reasoning about — Jesus! But why? ... Surely it was all over? ... Jesus was dead and would surely remain dead? ... Why then talk any more about that Deceiver? ...

That Deceiver? No, the two Emmaus travellers would not dare to say that. They will not say such a thing, because deep in their hearts there is love to Jesus. Oh, they cannot do without Him. Without Him their lives are empty and miserable. And yet ... and yet ... they will have to do without him, for He is dead! That is why they are so sorrowful. That is why their faces are so downcast. They cannot forget Him. So that is why they are talking together about those things which have happened the last few days.

Oh, their hearts shrink with grief and sadness. Why ... Why did everything have to come to pass like this? ... If He was in truth the Messiah, why had He then not defended Himself? ... Why

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had He not shown His almighty power? ... Why had he not struck down those wicked enemies in His wrath? Why should the cursed death on the cross be the end?

To none of these questions can they find an answer. All these questions perplex them. They are quite confused. But - a Deceiver? ... No, that they would not dare to assert.

Luke 24 vv 14-34

Suddenly they are accosted by a stranger. They are rather surprised for evidently they had not noticed Him before. The Stranger appears to be making for Emmaus also, for He walks with them; be sure they were not very pleased to have company. They had much rather remained alone. Now a strange intruder joins them and they can no longer talk together so confidentially.

They glance at Him stealthily. No, they do not know Him.

"What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" says their unknown fellow traveller.

Cleopas, one of the two, answers sharply: "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

Can you hear, that he really does not answer the enquiry of the unknown Traveller. He almost seems to snarl at the Stranger.

But the Stranger does not become angry. He asks kindly: "What things?" He means: "What has been happening? Tell Me all about it."

Well, now that the Stranger is so kindly persistent, they relent. They tell Him about Jesus, their Master. They tell Him that he was a Prophet,

mighty in deed and word. But they also inform Him how Jesus had been taken by the Chief Priests and crucified. Oh, that is what their hearts are full of. They say that they had hoped that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Messiah, but He has now been dead three days, so ...

Disconsolately, with a gesture of despair, they shrug their shoulders. Yet, now that they have started to speak, they tell all.

"Yea", they continue, "and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body they came, saying, that they had seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not."

In their voices we can detect doubt, unbelief. Perhaps those last words were followed by a sigh. They look ahead sadly, with tearful eyes.

Luke 24 vv 25-32

"Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

Now, who speaks thus? ... Well thus speaks the Stranger to the two on the Emmaus road. He calls them "fools" and "slow of heart". So He is rebuking them.

And ... do they get angry at these words? ... No, they have not time for that, for the Stranger proceeds to tell them that all those things had to happen. Moses and the other prophets had all foretold the coming of the Messiah, but they also spoke about the suffering and death of the Christ.

The unknown Stranger goes on to

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expound all those prophecies. He explains everything clearly and plainly. He speaks to them about the meaning of those prophecies. He shows them that it is just through these latest happenings that everything is fulfilled, it was necessary that Jesus should suffer and die.

The two men listen breathlessly. They have never heard words like these. The Bible has never been so plainly declared to them. And everything which this Stranger says is true. Their eyes are opened to understand the prophecies. They forget their sorrow and misery. They just listen. The unknown fellow-traveller speaks calmly and quietly.

Almost without realising it, they enter the village of Emmaus. Their destination has thus been reached unnoticed. Time has flown.

When they get to their house, the Stranger salutes them and makes as though to go further. But the two Emmaus travellers do not want that. They ask Him to stay the night with them. They say: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Yes, they beseech Him to come into their house.

Then their unknown companion agrees, and they go indoors.

The two friends hope that He will tell them still more about Jesus of Nazareth. Their hearts burn with longing desire.

First, however, they must have something to eat, for they have walked a long way. A simple meal is quickly prepared. And then ... ?

No, neither Cleopas nor his friend ask a blessing for the food, but it is the Stranger who prays. The Stranger takes the bread, breaks it in pieces and gives them to eat. This Stranger acts

just as though He is the host.

The two friends observe all this in amazement. They are astonished. Suddenly the two disbelieving men have a shock. Their



"Did not our heart burn within us?"

eyes are opened. All at once they see who their unknown Guest is. He is ... the Lord Jesus Himself. Perhaps they even saw the wounds in His hands. They recognise their beloved Master. They thought that He was dead, but now they see that He lives. He - He Himself has walked with them from Jerusalem to Emmaus. From His mouth they have heard that wonderful exposition of the prophecies.

But then He disappears suddenly from their sight. They see Him no more. The sacred joy remains in their hearts. Their unbelief, their doubt, their annoyance, has all gone. It has all been removed from their hearts by their Saviour. Now they have got an answer to all those questions which had arisen within them. Now they doubt no more. Now they know that the women had not been talking "nonsense". Probably they were ashamed of their unbelief. Oh, they could now sing for joy!

Luke 24 vv 33 and 35

Shortly afterwards the two men are hurrying back to Jerusalem. What? ... Shall they

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remain in Emmaus, now that the Lord Jesus had appeared to them? ... No, no, they must tell it to the other disciples also. They must make them partners of their joy. So they have shut their door and are hastening towards the city.

The sun may well have sunk, they will indeed have to walk that long journey back in darkness, but that does not matter. They are only too pleased to do it. They want to make the others, who are probably still sitting together despondently, as happy as they now feel.

Look, there they go, some time later, through Jerusalem's streets. They come to the house where the disciples of Jesus are gathered. At the sound of their knock the door is carefully opened, for it had been securely locked, because they were afraid. Such strange rumours were going about the city. They themselves are being accused of stealing the body of Jesus. Oh, they might well be taken prisoner shortly by Roman soldiers. Perhaps the governor will punish them severely. That is why they have shut the door fast, and are listening with anxious hearts to every sound which penetrates from without. Now you can well understand why the door was opened so cautiously.

The two men from Emmaus step inside.

Before they can relate what has taken place, however, the disciples speak to them thus: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

Then they proceed to relate what had happened on the road to Emmaus. Happiness reigns in the hearts of the women; in the heart of Mary Magdalene. Happiness glows in the eyes of the two Emmaus travellers. And can you see how moved Simon is? ... For them it is in truth

Passover. The risen Christ had appeared unto them.

Has it ever been truly Passover for you, children?

Luke 24 v 34

1 Corinthians 15 v 5

The two who returned from Emmaus had been told "the Lord is risen indeed, and has been seen of Simon."

Simon? ... Simon? Who is Simon? ... Do you know? ... Yes, of course, by Simon they mean Peter. What? ... Has the Lord sought out Peter? ... That liar? ... That perjurer? ...

Yes, boys and girls, the Lord Jesus had indeed sought out His unfaithful disciple, who had so basely denied Him.

Peter had left the little company. Why? ... Was he also angry? ... Was he also annoyed by the rejoicing of the women and of Mary Magdalene? Would he no longer listen to those "idle tales"?

No, Peter had left for another reason. He could no longer endure it there. Why not? Well, the women said that He lived. Mary Magdalene came a little later with the news that He lived. Clearly and painfully fresh the memory comes back to Peter of what he had done. He had denied his Master. He had declared with an oath that he did not know the Man.

Oh, Jesus will want no more to do with him. He no longer belongs here. He is an unfaithful disciple, a liar. And now he hears that Jesus lives, doubt comes into his heart. Could it be true? ... But, if it is true, then he doesn't dare to come within sight of his Master. He had gone with John to the sepulchre, and - yes ... that was

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empty.

He sought solitude where he could sob out his grief and misery. His sorrow of soul for his wrong-doing is almost unbearable. He cannot do without Jesus. His soul craves for his Master, but ... ? He is no longer worthy of Jesus' notice. What went on in Peter's soul during those hours, I cannot tell you.

In my thoughts I see him sitting there with big tears of true repentance and sorrow trickling down his cheeks. And then, suddenly, his Master is standing by him. No, Jesus does not cast him off, the Saviour comes to seek him out. That is more than Peter had ever dared to expect.

What those two said to each other, we do not know. The Bible does not tell us. We only know that the Lord appeared to Peter too, God's Word tells us no more.

One thing, however, is certain. Peter had sinned deeply, very deeply indeed, yet his sins were forgiven through the Saviour, who died for him on the cursed tree; who also shed His blood for him.

What do you think? ... Would there have been room in Peter's heart for the Saviour? ... Oh, I don't need to ask that, for you can answer it easily, can't you? Peter was a lost sinner. But it was just for such lost ones, for such hell-worthy sinners that the Messiah obtained life. No, Jesus did not come to bring the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Nowadays, thousands talk about "dear Jesus", but - they have never had their sins discovered to them. They have never truly become sinners before God. They have never learned to know themselves as lost.

Oh, boys and girls, never forget, if you are ever to learn to know the Saviour, then there must first be made ROOM for Him in your soul, you must learn first that you are lost in sin and guilt. And it is the Holy Ghost that works that in the hearts of all God's people.

Entreat the Lord then that He will thus teach you also.