

# Emmaus and Jerusalem.

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*Luke 24: 13-53.*

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This familiar scripture has been enshrined in the hearts of God's people in all ages; and few can read it without coming under its peculiar charm. The condescension and tenderness of our blessed Lord, in His conversation with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, could not fail to commend His unspeakable grace to the affections of His people. Perhaps, however, it has been viewed too much on the side of the disciples, and hence not enough has been made of the presentation of the Lord Himself in the various aspects which are here found. The object the Lord had in view was not only to convince the disciples of the reality of His resurrection, but it was also to make Himself known in several different characters. This undoubtedly would be easier for the disciples to apprehend after His ascension; and probably the Lord had this end in view. Be this as it may, the whole narrative is fraught with rich spiritual instruction, and it is to this we invite the reader's serious attention, reminding ourselves and him that it is only the Holy Spirit of God Who can teach us its divine meaning.

In the first place, the Lord is undoubtedly seen as the GOOD SHEPHERD. He had already laid down His life for the sheep, and now He further carried on His work of restoring the fainting souls of two of His flock who, for the moment, were cast down and disheartened. Indeed, under the stress of the events of the last few days, they seemed to have abandoned all hope, though it is very evident that their affection for Christ had not abated. They clung to Him still, but unable to deal with the facts, as they thought, which had arisen, they turned their backs upon Jerusalem, and were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs. We read that they talked together of all these things that had happened, and the darkness of doubt spread its heavy pall upon their spirits. The Lord had arisen, though they knew it not, and He saw the state in which these two faithful followers of His had fallen. If they loved the Lord, as they certainly did, He loved them far more, and thus with the object of dispelling their doubts and fears He Himself, while they communed together and reasoned, drew near and went with them. Whether by divine power or otherwise, their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. This was necessary for the work the Lord had in view of restoring their souls.

It should be a great help to all who seek to shepherd the Lord's people, to those who are pastors by a divine gift, to notice the method of the Lord's dealing with these two erring saints. He Himself knew all their thoughts and the cause of their trouble, and yet He elicits by His questions what was in their minds. In other words, He led them to empty their hearts before He speaks a single word. He might have said at once, "Here am I, as risen from the dead"; but He sought first to bring them into a right state of soul for the apprehension of the truth of His resurrection.

Thus He commences with them by asking, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" In reply to this, one of them whose name was Cleopas, expressed his surprise by saying, "Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass in these days?" The Lord simply replied, "What things?" And then Cleopas poured out his whole heart, and proceeded to narrate what had taken place concerning Jesus of Nazareth, how that He was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and the rulers had delivered Him to be condemned to death, and had crucified Him. Such were the facts as they had presented themselves to the minds of these two disciples.

Having given these, Cleopas goes on to speak of the effect of these things upon themselves. With great sadness he adds, "But we trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done," that is the day upon which they had been led to expect His resurrection. Then, moreover, he tells of the visit of the women of their company to the sepulchre on the morning of that day, and that, while not finding the body of the Lord, "they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive." There was yet more; certain of the disciples went also to the sepulchre and found it even so as the women had said, and then Cleopas added what contained the cause of all their grief, "But Him they saw not."

The bottom was thus reached, and in reaching it two things were made apparent: first, that Cleopas and his companion were true in heart to the Lord; and secondly, that all their sorrowful despondency sprang from the fear that their hopes as to Christ were buried in His sepulchre.

The Lord having led them to expose their inmost feelings, proceeded to meet their need. And first of all He led them to the Scriptures, chiding them that they had been so slow to believe the prophetic testimony concerning the sufferings of Christ and His glory. Then, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.

It may be well to pause for one moment to point out that the wisdom of Christ, as thus displayed, should be a guide to us in dealing with souls in their difficulties. As may be perceived, there was no argument; but, the Lord simply brought the scriptures to bear on the subject in hand, teaching us surely that it is from the Scriptures, used in the power of the Spirit, the perplexities of souls may be met.

During this conversation they had arrived almost at their destination, and Jesus "made as though He would have gone further." He knew the state of their souls, the effect His teaching had had upon them, that, as they afterwards confessed, their hearts had been burning within them while He talked to them by the way, and while He opened to them the Scriptures, and that there was yet further work to be done before their restoration was effected. *That further work was the revelation of Himself.* When, therefore, He made as though He would go further it was but to bring out the request, which He knew would be forthcoming, that He would abide with them. And so energetic were their desires that they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us." The word "constrain" is a strong one: its force is, that they would take no denial. Not that the Lord needed constraint; He was only too willing to respond to their request; but nothing delights His

heart more than to be constrained by His people to enter in and abide with them. Nay, He often knocks at the door of our hearts for admittance, and nothing ministers greater delight to Him than listening to His voice, judging ourselves for having kept Him outside, and thus opening the door for Him to come in and sup with us, and we with Him. In this case He went in to sup with them, for He sat at meat with them. How much, we might say, they would have lost if they had not constrained Him to enter! So with ourselves. Does He not often draw near to us, and yet we miss the enjoyment of His presence because we do not constrain Him to enter and abide with us?

But if He condescend to sit at meat with His own, He must at all times take the first place. He must be supreme in every circle in which He deigns to enter. Let us remember this when we desire His presence. Thus HE took the bread, and blessed and brake and gave to them. No doubt, they had often seen Him do the same thing when with His disciples; but whether so or not, this simple act of our blessed Lord was used to open their eyes, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight. But why did He depart so quickly when, as we may be sure, they would have given all they possessed, little or much, to detain Him for further conversation? The answer is, that His work was done: He had found His wandering sheep, and He had restored their souls. It will be thus seen that their restoration was complete, for the mark of a good state of soul is the enjoyment of the Lord's presence. Like Mary, they had seen the Lord and they were abundantly satisfied. The proof of this is seen in that they go back to the place which they ought not to have left.

A very important lesson may be gathered from the way in which the Lord dealt with these two disciples. It is that all doubts will be dispelled by the manifestation of Christ to our hearts, and that the revival of Christ in the affections is the sure sign of restoration. No doctrine will effect this, no clearness of teaching, no demonstrations from the Scriptures, but what we all need is that Christ should be known and be paramount in our souls.

The next character in which Christ reveals Himself in this scripture is as the SECOND MAN out of heaven (1 Cor. 15: 49). He was the Second Man when born into this world, and for God He displaced all others. In Him alone of all the millions of men who existed when the Lord came into this scene, God found His delight. As indeed seen from the song of the angels at His birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure (as it should be) in men," that is, in the One Who had been born into the midst of men. But though He was ever the Second Man from His incarnation, He was not in the condition of the Second Man until the resurrection. To remember this will help us in what follows.

The two disciples of Emmaus, after the Lord had made Himself known to them, rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered and them that were with them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread." They had come with overflowing hearts, longing to tell what they had heard and seen, but they found those who were gathered together with overflowing hearts also, testifying to the resurrection of their Lord. We do not wonder, therefore, to read, as they thus spake, that Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." We say we do not wonder, because hearts filled to overflowing with Himself will always command His presence. It is our response to His love that constrains Him to reveal Himself to us. Whenever we speak to one another of

Christ, He will always be One of the company (see Mal. 3: 17). Do our hearts long for His presence? Then let us speak together of Him more.

The first words He uttered were, "Peace be unto you," for He had made peace through His death on the cross, and in the joy of His heart He bestowed it upon them.

It may be well to notice that our natural feelings are often in conflict with faith. It was so with the disciples at this moment. In the first place they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit, and afterwards they did not believe for joy. Both their fear and joy their natural emotions — were hindrances to faith, but it should be added that emotions produced by the Spirit of God are helps to faith and not hindrances.

But mark how tenderly the Lord dispersed their doubts and fears, and what pains He took to convince them of the reality of His resurrection. So gently He says to them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts (reasonings) arise in your hearts?" Then with infinite grace He says, "Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself." Doubtless He submitted His hands and His feet to their inspection because of the marks of the nails, wherewith He had been fastened to the cross; and then, moreover, He even said, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Going still further, He showed them His hands and His feet; and finally, to chase away the lingering fears that obscured their vision, He said, "Have ye here any meat?" In response to His question they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and an honeycomb; and He took it and did eat before them, the blessed Lord, as the Risen Man, condescending to share the food of His humble followers.

All this was done to show to His disciples that He was a real man risen out of the grave. that indeed, as we have before said, He was the Second Man out of heaven. But notwithstanding He had in every possible way proved to them the reality of His resurrection, He was not content that their faith should rest upon the evidences of their senses, for He proceeded to teach them that what they had seen was in accordance with His own words, and that it was simply the fulfilment of the things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Him. Surely we may learn from this the exceeding value of the Scriptures, and that all the claims of men and all the views which they propound must be brought to the test of the written Word of God. If the Lord Himself did not dispense with the Scriptures, much less can we, and it behoves us to attend to their teaching in a dark and evil day.

But in the whole scene the Lord reveals Himself as pointed out, as the Second Man out of heaven; and, as St. Paul teaches, all who believe in Him are of His order. For he says, "As is the heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly." And as we have borne the image of the earthy, as we still do in our mortal bodies, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, that is, when we are raised from the dead and possess bodies like unto His glorified body.

Another character in which the Lord here appears is one that may be mentioned in a few words. It is as INTERPRETER of Scripture, for we read that He opened their understandings that they might understand the Scripture. The Spirit of God had not yet come. After Pentecost He was the Teacher; as the Lord Himself said: "But the Comforter, Who is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things," etc. (John 14: 26). Paul likewise

said: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God." John also bears the same testimony. The Lord thus acted as teacher when He opened the understanding of the disciples that they might understand the Scriptures.

Following upon this, and indeed connected with it, we have another character of Christ, even that of HEAD or the LAST ADAM. About to speak of their mission in the world, He says: "It is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (vv. 46-48). It is plainly as Head that the Lord gives this direction to His disciples. But before entrusting to them this commission, He pressed upon them that the facts of His suffering, death, and resurrection were in accordance with the Scriptures. Thus He says, "It is written," and it is well for us all when we are grounded upon what has been termed the impregnable rock of Scripture. Resting on this foundation, opinions may come and opinions may go, but they will never be able to disturb the divine certainty of the soul that is able to say, "Thus it is written." Permit us to press for a moment upon young Christians that they should diligently verify their beliefs and their doctrines from the Scriptures that they may be confident and assured in the midst of all the efforts of the enemy, whether by the Higher Criticism or otherwise, to undermine the foundations of Christianity. If the Lord put His disciples upon "Thus it is written," much more do we need to repose upon the same divine foundation.

The mission of the disciples was simple. It was that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. They were, moreover, to be witnesses of the things which they had seen and heard. Before we speak of the power which was necessary for the execution of their mission, we would call attention to its terms. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of the Risen Christ not, be it observed, remission of sins only, but also repentance, without which remission of sins could not be received. For repentance leads to self-judgment and confession, and thus produces the state of soul in which forgiveness of sins can be received and enjoyed. In like manner the apostle Paul testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20: 21), and likewise he proclaimed at Athens that God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. It is not that repentance is a condition of forgiveness, for God announces forgiveness to every one who will receive it; but it is, as we have said, that repentance brings the soul into that blessed state in which it is enabled thankfully to receive the divine gift.

The second part of their mission indicates those to whom they were sent. They were to preach in His name; that is, on behalf, and as the messengers, of the Risen Head, among all nations, but they were to begin in the place where He was crucified. The worst of sinners in a sense were to receive the first offer of divine grace — a testimony to the love of God and His unspeakable mercy. Beginning at Jerusalem, they were to widen out in their labours in ever larger circles until they had embraced all nations. As God desires that all men should be saved, His servants must be in fellowship with His own mind.

Then, as already pointed out, they themselves were to bear witness of the things they had seen and heard, as indeed the Lord says in the Gospel of John: "Ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (John 15: 27). The Spirit only could bear witness of the glory on which He had entered at the right hand of God; but they could testify to the Lord's life here upon the earth, to His death and resurrection, and to what He had communicated to them during the forty days before His ascension.

What follows is of exceeding importance. The Lord had qualified His disciples, given them their mission, and yet they were to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until He should send the promise of the Father upon them, that is, until they should be endued with power from on high. Let us mark it well, there must be, therefore, three things without which none of us who seek to serve can meet the Lord's mind. There must be knowledge of the Scriptures, of the facts of redemption; there must be a distinct mission from the Lord, that is an inward constraint or call; and there must be also the power of the Holy Ghost, without which neither the knowledge nor the call will be effectual. If it, however, be said that all have received the Holy Ghost, the question is, whether He is grieved or ungrieved, whether He is in power in our hearts, and in such power that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. Such are the workers whom the Lord needs, and such are those whom He can use to His own glory in blessing. We thus read that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4: 31). Oh! that the Lord would raise up many such servants in this day to use for the exaltation of Christ and for the conversion of many souls.

In conclusion, the Lord presents Himself as PRIEST. We read that "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (vv. 50-51).

The significance of this action in lifting up His hands and blessing them may be gathered from a scripture in Leviticus 9. There we read, that, after having offered the several sacrifices according to the divine command, Aaron "lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings" (v. 22). All these offerings shadow forth the one sacrifice of Christ, for He was both sin offering, burnt offering and peace offering - indeed, He is the antitype of all the sacrifices found in Leviticus. Bearing this in mind, we shall see the wonderful correspondence between the action of Aaron and that of our blessed Lord. The Lord had completed the offering of His sacrifice, and His resurrection was the demonstration that God had accepted it, nay, that He had been fully glorified by it, and so glorified that, in the joy of His heart, He came in and raised from the dead the One Who had endured the whole weight of His glory upon the cross. In the consciousness of this, on the foundation of His one, perfect, and efficacious, sacrifice, He had become the channel of all the blessing, which He had secured by His death, between the heart of God and His people; for God ever blesses His people according to His own estimate of the value of the sacrifice of Christ. God was now set free to bless according to His own eternal thoughts and purposes - and inasmuch as He had been set free by the finished work of His beloved Son, it is His delight to minister the blessing through the One Who is now glorified at His own right hand.

There is more, however, than what has been said. We have seen that Christ is here presented as Priest, and it is as Priest that He lifts up His hands to bless His own. We learn,

therefore, that it is upon the foundation of His sacrifice, and as risen from the dead, that He enters upon His office of Priest, and that it is by His intercession He secures for His people all that they need while passing through the wilderness, and also that He appears before God on their behalf. Into the variety of the blessings which He thus secures we do not at this time propose to enter, inasmuch as we desire to confine the attention of the reader to the attitude of blessing which the Lord assumed in departing from His disciples.

It is not only, however, that He blessed them, but while blessing them He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. The last sight, therefore, the disciples had of their blessed Lord was in connexion with His hands being outstretched to bless. And surely this teaches us that this is the perpetual attitude of the Lord while at the right hand of God. Think of it, beloved reader, for one moment, that not only has the Lord His eyes upon His beloved people, but that also His hands are, so to speak, ever stretched out over them in blessing. What consolation to the heart weary with difficulty and strife, what sustainment for the weak and despondent, what cheer for the sick and afflicted, and what a ministration of comfort for the bereaved, to look up beyond all the darkness that may have for the moment enshrouded them, and to see by faith the blessed Lord with His hands lifted up for their blessing. Surely a sight of this will fill the hungry with good things, and give songs in the night to the pilgrim through the wilderness. For the One Who is seen in this scripture, and apprehended by faith now at the right hand of God, is the One of Whom we read elsewhere that He is able to save to the uttermost (completely, or all the way through) all that approach unto God through Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them.

We may finally consider the effect which was produced upon the hearts of the disciples by the manner of the departure of their Lord. That they were deeply impressed, nay, wrought upon in the power of the Spirit, is clear from the fact that they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Even more than this, for we find that they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Their full hearts thus overflowed with gladness, and rose up to its blessed source in the heart of God. They recognized Him as the fount of all the blessedness into which they had been brought, and which reached them through God's appointed channel, His beloved Son. What wonder, therefore, that they were found continually in the temple praising and blessing God! We might thus say that perpetual adoration was the response begotten within them to the perpetual blessing indicated by the outstretched hands.

Happy people, to have had such a recollection of their blessed Lord. But why is this recorded? That we also, beloved reader, may identify ourselves with the experience of the disciples. It is true that we did not see the Lord depart with our mortal eyes; but if this record is made good in our souls in the power of the Holy Spirit, we shall often linger in meditation upon it, and see Him by faith ascending up on high in this attitude of blessing. Nay, more, we shall follow Him until He takes His place at the right hand of God, and then as we comprehend the real character of the office He has been pleased to undertake on our behalf, we shall never forget that, through His intercession, He is securing constant blessing for His people. If this be the case, the effect produced in the disciples' hearts will be reproduced in ours, and we also shall find an outlet for our affections, in response to His constant ministrations to us, in perpetual praise and adoration.

Thus this gospel closes in a blaze of light. All these rays of His glory blend into one and give us larger thoughts of the Person of our Lord and Saviour. May He flood the souls of both writer and readers with the brightness of His glory, and so fill our vision that He may be ever the absorbing object of our affections, affections which will express themselves in devotedness while waiting for His return. E. D.