

"CHRIST AND THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS"

Chapter 16

Studies in the Gospels

by

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Mark xvi. 12, 13; Luke xxiv. 13-35.

We have a slight hint of this beautiful little history, and indeed the history itself, but in barest outline, at Mark xvi. 12. He gives there very much such a summary abridgement of it as he gives of the Temptation elsewhere (i. 12, 13). For the breadth and fulness of detail, which render this one of the most interesting records of the Great Forty Days, we are altogether indebted to St. Luke.

The Resurrection had taken place already; but the disciples had refused to credit it. The Sun of Righteousness, which seemed to have set for ever, had again risen with healing on his wings; but the disciples, not without grave fault of their own, are walking on in darkness still, in a darkness which in some sort they have made for themselves. So it fares with these two, of whom we here read: *'And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.'* The name of one of these favoured wayfarers we learn a little further on. It was Cleopas (ver. 18), who must not be identified with the Cleopas of John xix. 25.¹ Who the other might be we are not told. Apostle he certainly was not; and those who suggest Bartholomew or James cannot reconcile this with the fact that the two report the mysterious interview to the Eleven (ver. 23), could not therefore themselves belong to the Eleven. Neither is it at all likely that the unnamed disciple was St. Luke himself; for this, again, seems scarcely reconcilable with the announcement of the Evangelist that the account which he gives in his Gospel was delivered to him by those who were 'eyewitnesses,' as well as 'ministers of the word' (i. 2); herein implicitly affirming that such 'eyewitness' he had not himself been, that he had not himself beheld, as these two beheld, the risen Lord. Jerome and others suppose that they may both have been of the Seventy; which is probable enough; but we cannot affirm it with any certainty. The village of Emmaus, north of Jerusalem, and mentioned by Josephus,² to which they were journeying, must not be confounded, as it has often been, with another Emmaus in the plain of Judæa, and not *'threescore furlongs,'* or something about seven miles, from Jerusalem, but not less than twenty from the capital city. All modern attempts to discover the site of this village have been unsuccessful.

'And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him' (cf. John xx. 14; xxi. 4). While St. Mark

¹ This Κλεόπας is short for Κλεόπατρος, while that (Κλωπᾶς) is an Aramaic name.

² B. J. vii. 6. 6. See on Emmaus, Keim, *Jesu von Nazara*, vol. iii. p. 555.

seems to lay the cause of the non-recognition of the Lord on the part of his disciples to his changed appearance (*after that He appeared in another form unto two of them*'), St. Luke finds it rather in their *'holden eyes.'*³ *'And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?'*⁴ More than one word here implies that the two disciples were in earnest debate; not unduly striving nor contending; but still regarding from different points of view, and each urging upon the other his own interpretation of, that stupendous event, of which they had three days since been the witnesses. To them thus earnestly debating, and allowing this earnestness to shew itself in their outward gesture and mien, the Lord joined Himself, in guise the most unpretending, as a fellow-traveller on the same road with themselves; but at the same time as one himself interested in the matter which could interest them so strongly, and moved no less by the settled sadness of their countenances; and who out of no idle curiosity would fain learn, if this might be permitted, what it was that stirred and saddened them so much.

The two disciples, as I think we may gather from their reply, were not perfectly pleased to be accosted, and interrupted in their confidential discourse with one another, by one who seemed to have no right to meddle with the sacredness of their sorrow. They cannot forbear expressing their surprise that such a question should have been put to them: *'And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art thou only a stranger at Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?'* The English Version is not here perfectly satisfactory. It seems to attribute the questioner's ignorance of what must be the cause of their grief to his being *'a stranger'* or sojourner at Jerusalem. But, not to say that such an event as the rejection and crucifixion of one who claimed to be the Messiah must have been just as well known to the pilgrims at the feast as to the actual dwellers of Jerusalem, the words will not bear this meaning. They are not without a certain difficulty; but on the whole it will be best and simplest to render the first clause in the sentence thus, *'Dost thou sojourn alone at Jerusalem?'* *'Dwellest thou,'* that is, *'in solitude there, apart from the busy concourse of men, and thus so withdrawn from acquaintance with all which is passing in the city, that no tidings have reached thee of the mighty and marvellous events which within the last few days have befallen?'* The disciples, in the all-absorbing interest which these events have for them, take for granted that, if only known, they must have the same for every other; and they have, moreover, been so blown abroad, that nothing but an absolute isolation from all company with his fellow-men can have hindered their questioner from having knowledge of them.⁵

3 The two statements are excellently reconciled by St. Augustine (*Serm.* 239. 2): *Alia enim effigies visa est, retentis oculis non apertis.*

4 *'And are sad'* is hardly an adequate rendering of *καί ἐστε σκυθρωποί*, though it might be difficult to improve it. *Σκυθρωπός*, expressing the downcast look of a settled grief, pain, or displeasure, and occurring in the New Testament only here and at Matt. vi. 16 (where Basil the Great exchanges it well with *στυγνάζων*), and in the Old at Gen. xl. 7; Dan. i. 10; Eccus. xxv. 23, from *σκυθρός* (and that from *σχύζομαι*) and *ᾤψ*, would be better expressed by *'dreary,'* if only this had not little by little drifted away in meaning from the *'traurig,'* with which it is identical, and which exactly represents the force of *σκυθρωπός*. For proof of this partial change in the meaning of *'dreary,'* see in Richardson's *English Dictionary* the quotation from Gower; and another passage in Richard of Hampole's *Pricke of Conscience*: *'Now es a man light, now es he hevy, Now es he blithe, now es he drery.'*

5 Beza: *Tu solus commoraris Hierosolymis?* with a shifting of the emphasis from *παροικεις* to *μόνος*. All which

The Lord's answer, '*What things?*' is exactly adapted to draw from the disciples a further communication. Had He replied that He knew, this would naturally have prevented Cleopas from entering further into a matter already familiar to his interrogator; and, of course, He could not answer that He did not know. His question serves the purpose for which it was intended: '*And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people*' (cf. Acts vii. 22). From this answer of theirs it is evident that the mystery of Christ's divine nature was hidden from them as yet; or if at any time they had caught glimpses of it, these now were completely obscured by the thick shadows which during the last days had closed around their Lord. Jesus was to them '*a prophet,*' and, as we presently see, *the prophet,* He that '*should have redeemed Israel,*' the Messiah therefore; but the Jewish anticipations of a Messiah (and they had not lifted themselves above these), did not involve more than glorious human prerogatives. That Messiah should come, and that God should come, they expected both; but that both promises should be fulfilled in one and the same person, that these two stars of hope, which had lighted Israel through long ages of gloom, should in the actual fulfilment blend and become a single star, this was a mystery hidden, we may say, or almost hidden, from prophets and kings, from those who most waited for the consolation of Israel.

They go on to complain of the reception which, notwithstanding all these glorious manifestations of his power both in word and work, He had found from the spiritual chiefs of the people: '*and how the Chief Priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted*' (they speak of it as a trust which they must now renounce, which indeed they *have* renounced), '*that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.*'⁶ To say, as some do, that this redemption which they looked for at the hands of the Messiah was merely a deliverance from the yoke of their worldly oppressors, is certainly a mistake. It may have been thus with many; but there were always those who understood that the deliverance must reach much deeper than this; that to be a redemption worth the name, it must be a redemption from sin, from the bondage of unruly appetites and inordinate desires. It was indeed true that this deliverance would necessarily, in God's good providence, have drawn after it that other deliverance; that if Israel had turned to God, and welcomed his Anointed, the yoke of its Roman lords would, in one way or another, have soon been broken from its neck; for this bondage was but an echo of the other; and thus the faithful in Israel may very possibly have blended, in all likelihood did blend, the two deliverances into one; but still this outward redemption was not in their thoughts the beginning, still less was it the whole, of the redemption. In the prophecy of the father of the Baptist the two redemptions, from the yoke of evil and from the yoke of their foreign oppressors, are wonderfully blended together. He whom God shall raise up, a horn of salvation for his people, shall deliver them from their enemies; but this, that they may serve Him in righteousness and true holiness all the days of

could be urged against this rendering is that *παροιχεις* thus fails to obtain its full force, and is too much rendered as though it were *κατοιχεις* : but the other explanations, such as are offered by Theophylact, Castalio (quoted by Beza), Meyer, and others, seem to me either absolutely untenable, or encumbered with far more serious difficulties than is this.

6 Augustine (*Serm.* 235. § 2): Quando enim cum illis fuerat ante passionem, omnia prædixerat, passurum se fuisse, moriturum, tertio die resurrecturum; omnia prædixerat; sed mors illius, illorum oblivio fuit. Sic perturbati sunt, quando eum viderunt in ligno pendentem, ut obliviscerentur docentem, non exspectarent resurgentem, nec tenerent promittentem. Nos, inquiunt, sperabamus quia ipse erat redempturus Israël. O discipuli, sperabatis? ergo jam non speratis.

their life (Luke i. 68-79; cf. John viii. 31-36).

They go on: '*And beside all this,*' in addition to that cruel death inflicted on Him by our rulers, and sufficiently explaining the sadness which thou hast noted in us, '*to-day is the third day since these things were done.* We might have had some glimpses of hope up to this present time, seeing that while He was alive, He more than once uttered mysterious words not merely about his own death, words which we have found only too true, but also about a triumphant reversal of that doom of death, mysterious words about what should happen on the third day after his death; but this day has arrived, and is unmarked by any change.' How much unbelief is there here. The third day has come, but it has not gone; and how could they be sure that He had not already made good his words? indeed, there was much to render it likely that He had. Their own words which follow imply as much: '*Yea, 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 also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive*' (ver. 1-10; John xx. 1, 2). The hesitating, doubting disciples will not confidently affirm of this that it was a mere subjective imagination of these women; as little pledge themselves to its objective reality. They speak of it therefore as '*a vision of angels,*' leaving this matter undecided. They go on to tell of the visit of Peter and John to the sepulchre; '*and certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said.*' But, having thus stated all which gave them warrant for hope, they yet leave off with the mournful, desponding words--'*but Him they saw not*' (cf. ver. 12; John xx. 3-10).

They have poured out all their hearts before Him. It is now his turn to speak. He still, indeed, preserves his incognito; their eyes are holden as at the first, so that they still see in Him no more than the sympathizing stranger, who has joined himself to them in the way. Much, no doubt, they must have wondered when they found in Him a scribe instructed to the kingdom; one who took the part of their former hopes against their present fears; one whose very rebukes, earnest as they were, must have been welcome; for it was their despair which He rebuked; and just so far as they acknowledged those rebukes to be just, their despair must have given place to hope, their sorrow have been turned into joy. '*And He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.*' Some Scripture they had believed, as much as fell in with their pre-conceived notions, prejudices, and opinions; which is so often the way with us all; but not '*all that the prophets had spoken.*' Man's word, and woman's word, and angels' words, they had paid more or less heed to all these; but God's word, that word which liveth and abideth for ever, they had not built and established themselves on it. Of that word they had not enquired, nor sought to learn from it how it should fare with the Christ of God; else they would have discovered that the very things over which they were mourning, as the defeat and discomfiture of all their high-raised expectations, had long ago, even from the beginning, been fore-announced and declared needful preliminaries to his entrance into his glory. They would there have learned that these sufferings and this death, so far from giving the lie to their Lord's pretensions as the Christ, were actually laid down in Scripture as things without the endurance of which the true signs of the Messiah would have been wanting in Him; that only through the vestibule of death was it appointed for Him to pass into the palace of life: '*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory*' (cf. Acts xvii. 2, 3)? They hitherto had spoken of Christ in a roundabout manner, as '*He that should have redeemed Israel*' (ver. 21); but the Lord at once

employs this word which stood at the centre of all Jewish hopes. They err who conclude from these words that Christ had entered into his glory already; He did not do this till his Ascension, and this which He is speaking now is not history, but doctrine. Did not the Scripture announce a suffering Messiah before a reigning and glorious One?

'And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself' (cf. ver. 44; John i. 45; Acts xxvi. 22, 23; 1 Pet. i. 11). What, we may reverently enquire, were the passages to which the great Prophet of the New Covenant mainly referred, as having in Himself been fulfilled? And first, what prophecies of a suffering Messiah did He recognize and allow, claiming in the books of Moses for his own? He began, as we can hardly doubt, with the *protevangelium*. The Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, or, in other words, inflict on him a wound which should be deadly, was not Himself to escape unscathed altogether; this same serpent should bruise his heel (Gen. iii. 15). And then there were the types, claimed by the Lord in the days of his flesh, or by those who wrote concerning Him, as fulfilled in Him; the brazen serpent (Num. xxi. 9; John iii. 14; Wisd. xvi. 6); the Paschal Lamb (Exod. xii. 46; John xix. 36); and as the types, so also the typical persons; Joseph, who from the lowest humiliation of the pit and the dungeon passed to the highest place of dignity and honour, even to the right hand of the throne; David, who suffered so much and so long from the persecutions of Saul--these, with many more. And when the august Interpreter of the things in Scripture concerning Himself reached the prophets, it can be little doubtful that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was the central prophecy which He expounded. Around this there would be grouped the great prophetic Psalms of the Crucifixion--the Psalms are not specially referred to here, but at ver. 44⁷--as eminently the twenty-second, claimed by the Lord upon his cross (Matt. xxvii. 46; cf. Mark xv. 24), and the fortieth, claimed in like manner for Him by his apostle (Heb. x. 5); then further Daniel ix. 26; and the book of the prophet Jonah; while Zechariah would prove eminently rich in prophetic glimpses of all which had just on Calvary been fulfilled (xii. 10; xiii. 7). These disciples had assumed that Jesus of Nazareth could not be the Christ, *because* He had suffered these things; the Lord shews them from all Scripture that He could not be the Christ, *unless* He had suffered these things.

And now, while He was still engaged in opening to them the Scriptures, *'they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went; and He made as though He would have gone further;'* not, that is, pretended, but actually would have gone further, unless they had detained Him; by thus offering to proceed, proving them, whether his words had taken any mighty hold upon them or not; and whether there was any desire upon their part for further communion with Him (cf. Mark vi. 48). It was seen that there was so. Much they had heard, yet they evidently desired to hear still more. *'But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them'*--to be their guest now, as two of their number at the outset of his ministry had been his (John i. 39).

'And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.' He, in some sort the guest, assumes at once the place of the host, and, as on

7 On the threefold division of the books of the Old Covenant, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, this last being sometimes designated as τὰ ἄλλα βιβλία or τὰ λοιπά τῶν βιβλίων, or τὰ γραφεῖα or τὰ ἀγιόγραφα, see Professor Lightfoot, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, § 28.

other occasions (Matt. xiv. 19; xv. 36; xxvi. 26), the prerogatives of the householder or goodman of the house, to whom this blessing and giving of thanks of right belonged. *'And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.'* He was known to them, as they themselves report to the Eleven, *'in breaking of bread'* (ver. 35). This might seem to imply that there was something in the act of breaking the bread by which they recognized at last with whom they had to do. Perhaps, as has been suggested, and as may be seen in some old pictures, the stigmata, the marks of the wounds in the hands, through this action of his became visible. At the same time the words, *'their eyes were opened,'* going before *'they knew Him,'* and put evidently as the condition of their knowing, imply that it was not a mere natural conclusion which they drew from something which they saw Him do, but a supernatural enlightenment, a ceasing of the condition indicated at ver. 16, where it is said, *'their eyes were holden.'* But what was there, it may be asked, in this *'breaking of bread'* by which they knew Him? Some answer that this was a celebration of the Holy Eucharist,⁸ and that they recognized the form of consecrating words. But, in the first place, certainly these two were not present at the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, for only apostles, which these are not, were there. And then, in the second place, it is an entirely gratuitous assumption that this was an Eucharistic celebration. Roman Catholics are fond of asserting that it was so, thus to find warrant and authority for reception under one kind, only bread being mentioned here. The blessing of the bread can of itself prove nothing. It is quite true that this is mentioned, and that it constituted an essential part of the Eucharistic celebration (Mark xiv. 22); but as at other times also He blessed the bread (Mark vi. 41), no argument can be drawn from hence; and for us the absence of one of the constituent elements of this sacrament may well be decisive that no such sacrament was here. The words can scarcely mean more than that at that solemn moment their Lord revealed to them who He was. The manner of his disappearance, like that of all his comings and goings after the Resurrection, is mysterious (John xx. 19, 26), and quite unlike anything which had found place before. His body, it is evident, was not any longer submitted to the same laws as those to which ours are submitted now, and to which his own had been hitherto submitted.

'And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?' They wonder that this had not enabled them long since to guess who it was that had thus been speaking with them. The nearest parallel to this of the heart burning within them may be found in the words of the Psalmist, *'While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue'* (Ps. xxxix. 3; compare Jer. xx. 9). With such tidings to tell, they do not tarry any longer at Emmaus. *'They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.'* Yet if they imagined that they were the first to bring the glad tidings, in this they were disappointed--if disappointment it could be called; they did but contribute another stream to swell the great flood-tide of joy, which every moment was rising higher and higher. They found the Eleven, and them that were with them, able to answer good tidings with good; nay, as it would seem, preventing their good tidings with those which they had themselves to tell, with evidence coming in from one quarter and another, and now from the very chief among themselves, that the barriers of the grave had indeed been broken, that their Lord was in truth that Conqueror of death, that Prince of life, which in their unbelieving ears He had proclaimed

⁸ Thus Augustine (*Serm.* 239): *In panis fractione cognoscitur, quia ibi percipitur, ubi vita æterna percipitur.* For reasons against any such conclusion see Scudamore, *Notitia Eucharistica*, p. 10.

Himself to be: *'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon'* (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 5). And yet, anticipated though their tidings had been, every confirmation of a fact so marvellous, so far transcending all experience and all hope, must have been welcome; welcome therefore their confirmation of it, as they threw their symbol into the common stock of hope ripening now into glorious certainty, as *'they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.'*⁹

9 [Trench has a very long footnote here that is almost entirely in Latin. We have omitted it.]