

On The Road to Emmaus (Conversations with Jesus)

Chapter One

Cleopas, your wife must be out of her mind with grief over Jesus. He is dead, the dead do not rise again.

“Well Jesus is said to have raised the dead while he was alive” he answered me.

“Yes, I have heard those reports as well, but even if Jesus could raise the dead, how could he raise himself if it was, he who was dead? Jesus was...” My reply to Cleopas was cut short by a lively voice “Greetings friends!” We turned around and saw a stranger coming up behind us with a warm smile upon his face. “May I walk with you since we seem to be heading the same direction?”

“Of course, we would welcome the company” Cleopas answered, and I added my agreement. We walked along in silence a short distance, I guess, lost in our own thoughts trying to make sense of what Mary, my friend's wife and some other woman had told us after coming back from the tomb of Jesus. They said, there were two people dressed in white who had told them Jesus was not there, that he had somehow risen. Were the two in white angels; were they charlatans who had taken the body of Jesus; or were the woman hallucinating it all? I didn't know what to make of it. The sad reality was Jesus was crucified in a horrible manner, bloodied and whipped without mercy before even being nailed to the cross. “He did not deserve this”, I thought to myself and nearly out loud.

Suddenly the stranger's voice broke the short silence. “*What were you discussing together as you walked along before I came up on you?*”

We stopped, both of us looking into the face of this man, his bright and lively demeanor contrasted against the dejected and downcast faces of Cleopas

and myself. It was Cleopas who answered him; *“Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”*

“What things?” His face turning slightly more serious as he spoke.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” we both replied, our voices wanting to talk over the other. *“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”* I took over the conversation as I added; *“And what is more, it is the third day since all of this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”* Cleopas nodded in agreement before adding; *“my wife was one of those who first discovered the body missing. I think she, and the others, must have lost their minds in grief.”*

The stranger did not answer immediately, but took in what we had told him thoughtfully, before answering; *“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”*

His words stopped us in our tracks, and we looked at him not sure whether to challenge his impertinence or let him continue. I, in particular wanted to challenge him, but there was a resolve in his voice, that caused me to set aside my wounded pride and instead I answered; *“If you have something to tell us, please do.”*

“He smiled as he began; When judgment was first cast upon the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, did not God tell him; “I will put enmity between you and

the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

“He did” Cleopas answered.

“But what has this to do with Jesus” I asked?

“The Messiah will crush the head of the serpent, meaning Satan will lose in the end, but before he loses, he will strike the Messiah” he answered. I could see the puzzled expression of Cleopas, but I was the first to voice the question; “Are you telling us that Satan is a real being?” Cleopas added; “Our teachers taught that Satan is not real, but that he represents the struggle we have against temptation, and at best Satan is some kind of force in the world which seeks turn our hearts from God. Are you a teacher of the Law and the Prophets?”

“You are right to call me a teacher of the Law and the Prophets, but have you not read in Job where the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came with them? Did the Lord, your God not ask Satan; “Where have you come from? Did Satan not answer He who sits on the throne of heaven? Did not, each speak to the other?”

“They did” Cleopas answered sheepishly.

“Then how can you believe God is real and Satan is not?” The stranger continued his voice softening a bit; “To be sure though, Satan is a tempter, a deceiver and he is a force to be reckoned with on this earth. He has been given a measure of authority, but that will not last forever. His days are numbered and one day the Messiah will crush his head as foretold in the scriptures, but he will and indeed has already struck the heel of the Messiah.”

“Go on teacher” Cleopas said earnestly. I felt a quickening in my own heart as I recognized the truth of this man’s teachings as well.”

“When God tested Abraham, what did he ask of him?”

Cleopas was quick to answer; “God asked him to sacrifice his son of promise, Isaac as a burnt offering.”

“And as they were heading up mountain, what did Isaac ask his father?”

This time, I answered; “Isaac observed they had the fire and wood for the burnt offering but asked his father about the lamb for the offering since they had not brought one with them. He didn’t know it was himself that was to be sacrificed.”

“Was he truly the one being called the teacher asked?”

“I think so” I answered.

“What did Abraham say in response to Isaac’s question?”

Cleopas answered; He said; “*God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son*”.

“And did God” the teacher asked?

“He did” we both answered in unison.

“What is the lesson from this?”

“It demonstrated the great righteousness of Abraham, that he regarded the Lord God as more important to him than his son. It proved Abraham was worthy of being favored by the God” I answered confidently.

“It also showed the faithfulness of God, in that he stayed true to his promise with Abraham” Cleopas added to my own answer.

“It did show the faithfulness of God, but more than you know. Abraham’s reply to his son also revealed an immediate and future truth. Abraham saw the day of the Messiah, and he was glad for it when he said to his son; “God himself will provide the lamb”. The ram was the first sacrifice, but the second was the Messiah. Since Abraham did not hold back his only son from the Lord, the Lord God would not hold back his only Son for you. Did Jesus not tell you he was the Lamb of God? The Son of God is the lamb and fulfillment of what Abraham prophesied.”

“He did”, Cleopas admitted, “But his words seemed a mystery to me when I heard them.”

“So, you have heard Jesus speak before,” I asked?

“I have” he answered with a small smile forming as the words came out of his mouth.

“But isn’t the Messiah supposed to be a king who restores Israel to its former glory or even beyond its former greatness? How can the Messiah die and accomplish this? It seems impossible.”

“Is anything too difficult for God? What you ask is not difficult at all for he who sits on the throne, nor for his Anointed One. Oh, you of little faith. But the promise of the Messiah goes beyond just the nation of Israel. As it is written in the Psalms; *“Why do the nations conspire in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and his Anointed One. Let us break the chains they say, and throw off their fetters.*

The One enthroned in heaven laughs and the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:

He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you will be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him’.

The teacher stopped walking and so we stopped also. His face looked grim as he continued; “The Messiah, in time will rule not just Israel, but all the earth, before that happens, one day in the future, the nations of the world will conspire against God and his Anointed One by striking against Zion. It will be a terrible time for those who think they can overthrow the Lord. Their vanity will be their undoing. If only they had sought the Lord, if only they had come to

the Son, but they were not willing.”

We stood there looking at him in silence, tears formed on his saddened face. He was genuinely grieved by what he had told us as if he had a personal stake in it all.

I asked him; “Would you please sit for a moment teacher, under this tree over here and rest a bit? I have some water for you, if you like. He sat down and drank some of the water I offered him.

To be continued in the next chapter.