

On the Road to Emmaus (Conversations with Jesus)

Chapter two (The Ark of the Covenant)

We sat in silence for a few minutes as the Teacher gathered his thoughts. I had a little bread in a pouch and offered him some of this as well. He looked at the bread and asked, “the manna the Israelites gathered in the desert, was it naturally occurring or were its origins from heaven?”

“From heaven of course” Cleopas answered. It seemed an easy question, I thought to myself. He followed this question with another;

“Did Jesus claim to be the true bread that came from heaven?” I tried to recall an instance but could not remember Jesus making that claim. Cleopas on the other hand asserted that yes, he did remember Jesus claiming to be the true bread that came down from heaven.

“What about the Law given to Moses, did it originate with man, or did it come from heaven?”

We both answered, “from heaven”.

“What about the Aaronic Priesthood, were its origins from man, or did it come from heaven?”

“From heaven through God himself,” I answered, as Cleopas nodded in agreement. “Why are you asking us these simple questions?”

The teacher smiled at my question before replying, “because you need to be able to drink milk before you are ready for solid food.”

“We are ready teacher” I answered him.

“So, neither the bread, the Law, or the priesthood had its origins here on earth, but all came down from heaven in accordance with the will of God?”

"It is as you say" Cleopas agreed, "They all came down from heaven".

The teacher smiled again before asking; "In the Ark of the covenant, what three things were placed into it?"

"The word of God as written on the stone tablets, a bud from Aarons staff, and some of the manna which had been gathered."

"Why were these three placed in the Ark," the teacher then asked?

Neither of us answered immediately, though I think we presumed to know an answer, but I wanted to gather my thoughts on how to articulate it. It was Cleopas who answered him. "They were placed in the Ark of the Covenant to serve as a reminder of God's providence in providing us the Law, the Priesthood and that He is our provider. In the Ark it would serve as a constant reminder to future generations of the Lord's work for His people."

Again, the teacher smiled, his spirit seemingly refreshed again; "You are more right than you realize. However, they also served as a foreshadowing of what, or rather, who was to come."

Cleopas asked; "What do you mean teacher?" His curiosity was on full display, but no more so than my own in this moment.

"It would foreshadow the Messiah who is the Ark of the Covenant. In him is the fulfillment of the Law and He is the High Priest and as you remembered, Jesus is the true bread from heaven. All three representations that were placed in the Ark find their fullness in the one called Messiah, or as you know him, Jesus of Nazareth."

"Teacher!" I gasped as my heart stirred with this new information. It all made sense now. What he said made perfect sense. If I understand you, then this means Jesus also came from heaven just as the Law, the Priesthood and the bread?"

"Yes, you understand correctly. They foreshadowed the Messiah, but not only the contents, The Ark itself also foreshadowed the Messiah."

"What do you mean teacher" I chimed in?

“What kind of wood was used to make the ark” he asked?

I searched my mind frantically for the answer, but Cleopas beat me to it.

“Acacia, it was constructed with acacia wood.”

“You are correct, but do you know why that wood was chosen?”

Cleopas replied, “I suppose it was because acacia wood is known for its durability. It is not subject to rot like many others. Because of this, it could hold the contents of ark without fear of decay. It was a worthy wood to hold those things that came down from heaven.” I could pick up there was a thoughtfulness to his words which suggested he was on the verge of a new understanding.

The teacher continued; “David wrote in the psalms; *‘Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay’* “Was David talking about himself or another?”

“Could it not be both” Cleopas answered?

“You are beginning to gain understanding Cleopas” he said joyfully. “David speaks about two people, he is one, but the other is the Messiah, though in the latter part, he is speaking only about the Messiah, since the body of David was subject to decay. The Messiah’s body would not see decay when he died. The wood used in the ark forshadowed the body of the Messiah.”

He then continued; “The ark itself; Did it come from heaven or from earth?” “The materials for the ark came from earth,” I answered.

“So, also the body of the Messiah would come from earth, yet he himself, like the contents of the ark, came from heaven”, the teacher stated with certainty.

“Do you understand what I am explaining to you?”

“I think so, but it all seems so fantastic” Cleopas answered, “and yet I believe it.”

The teacher went on; “The Ark in the temple stood for the presence of God

in the temple. When they traveled with the Ark, it was ahead of them as a sign of God who was leading them on their journey. *“As it is written; ‘So they set out from the mountain of the Lord and traveled for three days. The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest. The cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they set out from the camp. Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, ‘Rise up, O Lord! May your enemies be scattered: may your foes flee before you.’ Whenever it came to rest, he said, ‘Return, O lord to the countless thousands of Israel”* (Numbers 10:33-36 NIV).

“I think I understand” I said, “The Ark represents, not just the Messiah, but the ark also represents God, and Jesus claimed to represent his Father in heaven, though our chief priests also claim to represent God through the priesthood of Aaron.”

“The chief priests are blind guides. Their hearts are hardened to the truth of God, otherwise they would not have rejected and killed the Son of God. “The Ark was a prefigure of the Messiah who is God, but more than that, God was with the Israelites in the desert. It was not simply a symbol of God’s presence. He was with them.”

The teacher looked me in the eye and asked; “Later when the Philistines overcame the Israelites on the battlefield, what happened?”

“It was a sad day for all of Israel, the Philistines killed many thousands in battle, but worse, they captured the ark of the covenant and took it to the temple of Dagon, their chief god.” Even as I answered, I found myself wondering where he was going with this question.

He followed up with; “What happened while the ark was in the temple?”

I responded, “their god Dagon was humiliated before the ark as it was discovered to be laying on the ground before the ark on one morning, and on the next morning, their god lay broken on the ground before the Ark of God.

“On top of this, tumors began to break out among the Philistines until they finally decided to send the ark back to the Israelites,”

Cleopas added. “It was a sign that even though they had overcome the Israelites on the battlefield, it did not mean the God of Israel was less than the god of the Philistines.”

Again, the teacher smiled; “It is as you say, and eventually every knee will bow before the Son of God. The Father has ordained it.”

“For that to happen, he must live,” I thought to myself. I was beginning to wonder if what the women had said earlier might be the truth. How did this man have such understanding of the scriptures? I never would have considered the Ark of God a manifestation of the Messiah. Yet now it seemed so obvious that I was having a difficult time wondering why I had not seen it previously. On the other hand, none of the teachers I had in the past had ever spoke of such things. Were the mysteries of God really His to reveal at his pleasure and to whom he would have receive them?

The teacher stood up and asked; “Shall we continue the journey?”
“By all means” Cleopas answered as the two of us stood up.

The journey continues in the next chapter.

