

On the Road to Emmaus (Chapter 4)

He didn't answer right away; he was looking off in the distance as if contemplating something else. I thought perhaps he was distracted by something he was seeing, and I looked in the direction of his gaze, but saw nothing of interest. Just the usual things I had observed, having traveled this road many times before. I started to ask him again; "Are you speaking about the Messiah or..." I was suddenly cut off by his reply.

"How slow you are to understand; the Messiah and the Lord are one. Who is the Messiah if he is from ancient times? Who is David referring to when he said, 'The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' If the Messiah is the son of David, how is it David calls him Lord?"

"I do not know teacher," I confessed; 'But I am ready to listen and learn."

His tone shifted from mild frustration to one of forgiveness as he continued; "the kingdom of God is for those who are willing to listen, learn and accept the truth. For God is truth and those who come to him, must come to him seeking truth."

"We are seeking truth," Cleopas urged him.

"We are," I confessed, "please go on. Who is David referring to when he said, '*the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*'?"

The teacher answered; “the answer is made plain in the very same psalm. *‘The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.’* David is speaking of the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is speaking about Messiah. His kingdom will be an ever-growing kingdom whose roots are planted in Zion, but whose branches will cover all the earth. His troops will be willing on the day of battle, and He, Himself, will be arrayed in holy majesty.”

The teacher paused; “I am thirsty, may I have some of your water?”

“Of course, teacher” I answered as I handed him the skin which contained the water. He took a drink and handed it back. I decided to have some myself before securing it to my side. The sun seemed particularly warm on this day, and Cleopas took a moment to refresh himself as well.

The teacher began once more as we continued our journey; “The Messiah would precede David even though he is a descendant of David. “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind; ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’” The teacher went on; “Abraham considered Melchizedek to be greater than himself, and so when Melchizedek blessed him, Abraham gave him a tenth of all that he had.”

Who was Melchizedek that Abraham gave him a tenth of all he had;” Cleopas asked?

Before the teacher could answer I interjected; “Was he the Messiah?”

“Melchizedek is symbolic of the Messiah in that he had no beginning or end, but the Messiah precedes him, and Abraham. Melchizedek was a high priest and so it is with the Messiah as we have already talked about.”

I nodded, remembering what he had told us about the Ark of the Covenant, which included the buddings from Aaron’s staff.

The teacher went on; “Abraham gave a tenth of all he had to Melchizedek, but the Messiah is much greater than he. The Messiah has no beginning or end because He is before all things, nor does anything come after Him. He is both the son of man and the Son of God.”

“Abraham saw his day and was glad. Abraham gave a tenth of all he had to Melchizedek, but for the Lord, Abraham was willing to give up more. When asked to offer his son Isaac, the son God covenanted to bless him with. Abraham trusted in the Lord having reasoned that God would keep his promise regarding Isaac, so if need were, God would raise him from the dead. In a manner of speaking, that is what the Lord did. Remember, when Isaac asked his father about the sacrifice, how did Abraham answer him?”

“He said the Lord would provide the lamb for the sacrifice;” I answered.

“And did he?”

“The Lord provided a ram for him that was caught in a thicket by his

horns;” Cleopas answered, then continuing; “Abraham called that place; ‘The Lord Will Provide’ which became one name we have given to the Lord ever since; “YHWY Jireh”.

“Yes, the Lord did provide on that day, and many times before and after; but Abraham saw the time of the Messiah and understood the day would come when the Messiah would be the lamb which would be sacrificed. He saw that day and was glad, for it would mark victory over sin, and all nations would be blessed through that victory.

“Then the Messiah is not only for the Jews” I asked?

The teacher answered; “No. Did not the Lord, in his covenant with Abraham tell him; *“All peoples on earth will be blessed through you”*?”

“He did” Cleopas answered, “though we were never certain just how that promise was to come about.”

“It would be through the Messiah who is descended from Abraham,” the teacher replied. Yet though the Messiah would be a descendent of Abraham, he would also precede him, just as David recognized in the psalm.

“I confess, I truly cannot wrap my head around this teaching. How is it possible for the Messiah to precede someone, yet also come after them?”

“It is a difficult teaching, teacher,” Cleopas agreed.

“Is anything too difficult for the Lord of Hosts?” The teacher continued without waiting for an answer; “You should not be surprised at this teaching. Did not Jesus say the same when he informed the pharisees; *“I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!”*”

Cleopas looked intently at the teacher as though he was seeing him for the first time, but at the same time trying to remember if he had seen him before. The puzzlement on his face was almost distressing.

He finally spoke; “I have heard Jesus speak those words previously. He said these words to some pharisees when they confronted him about who he was. They made some powerful accusations against him, and he responded to them with such authority. After he said, ‘before Abraham was born, I am’ they picked up stones to stone him. But as they gathered stones, Jesus slipped away. I confess, I did not even see him leave.”

Cleopas gazed at Jesus once more as if trying to retrieve a distant memory that stood on the brink of recognition but somehow remained elusive. Finally, he asked; “Were you there when Jesus said these things?”

The teacher looked at Cleopas and myself and smiled before speaking; “I was, but you should understand that Jesus himself acknowledged that not only did he precede Abraham, but that he is God. “Israel would collectively reject their Messiah as it was foretold by the prophets long ago; *‘The stone which the builders*

rejected has become the chief corner stone". He continued; "Is it not ironic? They intended to heap stone upon stone; by stoning the chief corner stone yet God intends to build upon this cornerstone with something else.

I was suddenly struck with a moment of clarity. I was walking this road to Emmaus with Cleopas and this teacher, but I was also walking another road at the same time. It was the road of truth and righteousness. I realized then that two things can be true even if they sound contradictory. The Messiah could be born of a woman but still precede all as God. Jesus was called both the Son of Man and the Son of God. I snapped out of my thoughts though as the teacher said this last part. "Forgive me teacher" I asked, but what is it God intends to build upon the cornerstone which is Christ Jesus?"

"kyriakē oikia (the house of the Lord) which is made of people who have exchanged their hearts of stone to ones of flesh."

"The prophet Ezekiel shared the Lord's desire when he wrote; *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My Statues, and you will keep my judgments and do them.*

Cleopas acknowledged the teacher was right, before adding. "Is it a metaphor or something even more profound to say the stones they gathered in order to murder Jesus, represented the stones of their hearts?"

"Ahh," a smile lit up the face of the teacher, "you are beginning to

discern spiritual truth Cleopas.”

“Both are true. For within the heart evil is conceived, and it is in the hands of man to give birth to that evil. Yet, hands which commit evil can be purposed for good if they have been given a heart of flesh by the Spirit of God. “To build kyriakē oikia (the house of the Lord) is why the Messiah came.

“The Pharisee’s did not heed Solomon who warned them;
“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who built it”.
“Saul, Israel’s first king was rejected because he sought to build his own house apart from the Lord, though if his heart had not turned hard, the Lord would have established his house forever. Instead, Saul tried to wrest the house from the Lord and in doing so, God wrested it from him and gave it to David who had a heart of flesh towards the things of God. What message did the Lord God have for David, when David sought to build a house for the Lord?”

Cleopas answered, “God declared, that he had not asked David to build him a house, but that instead, God would build a house for David and would establish his kingdom forever.

The teacher continued Cleopas’s answer by reciting the words written by the prophet Samuel. Speaking to David, *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But my mercy shall not*

depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne will be established forever.”

I listened as the teacher recalled the words written in the book of the prophet Samuel. These words spoken to David were given to him by the prophet Nathan, who like Samuel was a respected messenger of God, but there was something I wanted to ask the teacher, but I was reluctant to do so out of fear that my question might bring about the scorn of the teacher whilst betraying my ignorance. Even worse, it seemed to question the reliability of God in fulfilling his promises.

The teacher was looking at me with a curious expression on his face. For a moment I wondered if he was reading my mind, but that could not be possible. Then he asked;
“Who is Nathan talking about?”

I answered meekly; “He is talking about the son of David, Solomon.”

Cleopas continue; “It would be king Solomon who would build a house for the Lord God to dwell in, and it would be through him that the Lord would establish his house forever.”

The teacher smiled slightly at Cleopas before turning his attention back to me; “And did God establish the house of David and Solomon forever?”

I felt trapped by this question and second guessed myself, wondering again if it were possible this man could read my thoughts. I hesitated before speaking, not wanting to answer him.

Finally, I could hold it back no longer and I answered; “no”. The last descendant of David to rule Israel was king Zedekiah. Babylon overthrew the nation of Israel and the promise of God ended.” Even as the last of these words tumbled out of my mouth, I regretted saying them. I was the fool who questioned God.

Cleopas tried to come to my rescue and cited that perhaps God had changed his mind as he did with king Saul since king Zedekiah did evil in the sight of the Lord and rebelled against Him. The teacher reminded Cleopas that the promise given to David through the prophet Nathan specifically informed him that God would not take away his kingdom as He had done to Saul. What else did this leave? Was the teacher going to have to admit the promise of God had failed? In a way I hoped this would be the case even though the ramifications of a promise made by God failing would be far worse than my own ego being bruised.

I finally mustered up the courage to ask; “What is the truth of the matter, teacher? Who is Nathan referring to?”

“Solomon is a foreshadow of the promise made, but he is not the fulfillment of the promise made. Solomon would build a house of cedar for the Lord, even as the Lord will establish his throne forever. God loved Solomon as he would a son and would chasten Saul for his sin, but the mercy God gives to Solomon would not be taken away as it was with Saul, but the ‘seed’ Nathan is referring to is not that of Solomon, but instead the Messiah who will be a descendant of David and Solomon. The Messiah will build the true house for God and God will call him Son even as the Messiah calls Him

Father. As the Son builds a house for the Name of God, so also the Father will establish the throne of the Son forever. In doing so, the promise made to David will be fulfilled.

“I barely whispered; “Then the promise of God did not fail?”

The teacher looked at me with tenderness before speaking; “The promises of God never fail.”