

# I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS



## Forum 2018

### 'I am with you always' – together in God's mission –

### Multi-voice Bible Study

Luke 24: 13-35 (Emmaus)

William Kay

#### The Emmaus Story: Walking Together on the Way

We've heard the account of the walk on the road to Emmaus when Jesus himself joins two sorrowful disciples on their way from Jerusalem.

I want to focus particularly on the events that take place as they walked along. They begin with a discussion, an animated discussion, between the two disciples, one of whom is named Clopas and by tradition is the brother of Joseph the husband of Mary. Clopas by this tradition, which is reported by Eusebius the church historian, becomes father of the second Bishop of Jerusalem. As they walk the two disciples are in mental turmoil. They had assumed that Jesus, mighty in word and deed before God and the people, would have redeemed Israel, and their hopes have been bitterly disappointed. Jerusalem itself has been an uproar but the overwhelming emotions in the hearts of these two disciples is sadness. They are downcast, they are bereaved by the loss of Jesus and the failure of all their political and religious hopes.

Jesus came alongside them as they walk and as they talk and participates in the conversation by asking them to explain their discussion. The first point to note is, then, is that he asked a question to which he knows the answer. He knows very well what has happened in Jerusalem, but he wants them to articulate their sorrows and explain the intellectual basis for their condition. If we're going to make this application to ourselves, we might say that Jesus sometimes wants us to make explicit our implicit and covert disappointments and understandings. He wants to draw us out rather than to provide an answer that we may think is uncalled for. And so, the first stage of conversation is taken forward by the apparently uninformed and even naive question that Jesus asks.

When they have finished their explanation, an explanation that reveals their incomplete understanding of Jesus's identity – he is a prophet – that's as much as they can say. They fully acknowledge the power of his words and deeds. This is not a matter of controversy because

it is so widely known and so universally accepted, even by those who wanted to get rid of Jesus. Thus, the testimony of the sceptic has its value!

But here, now, is the central point I want to bring out. Because Jesus then speaks to the disciples about the Scripture and, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets' expounds those passages concerning himself, and from them, shows that the Christ *had to* suffer in order to enter into his glory. So, what he does is to focus upon the many passages of Scripture which speak of suffering preceding glory. The obvious texts which he would have referred concern the Passover lamb who is sacrificed to protect the Israelites before their exodus from Egypt. Or going further back, the sacrifice of the ram in the thicket as a substitute for young Isaac. In both these instances there is a substitution of one for another and the suffering of one on behalf of another. The ram dies, and Isaac lives; the Passover lambs die but the Israelites do not.

'Beginning at Moses and all the prophets' suggests a long, thorough, systematic and detailed study of the relevant texts. Without referring to any scrolls but rather from memory and from a shared knowledge of the Old Testament, Jesus goes through passage by passage showing how the entire Old Testament speaks of the suffering of the coming Messiah. We can be sure that Isaiah 53 receives attention since it is the fullest passage of this type. We ourselves in the traditional Christmas service of nine lessons and carols give a shortened form of the same thing: the old and carefully preserved words of Scripture are shown to be full of meaning. And what becomes convincing to the human mind is the unified and rounded picture that emerges about the Messiah as well as the Scripture's ability to speak from the past to the present. This dovetailing between the Old and the New Testaments is apologetically convincing and later appears in the preaching of the early church. Thus, the use of the Old Testament to substantiate and announce the work of Christ is fundamental to their exegetical programme and its proclamation of the gospel. We see the same exegetical thrust in the message of Philip to the Ethiopian (Acts 8) and the same is implied with the Pauline exposition in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17).

While the exposition Jesus gives takes place the two disciples listen, and we can easily presume that their entire intellectual understanding of the events of Good Friday are changed. Whereas previously they had seen a defeat and routing of their hopes, they now begin to understand the events, and to understand them as having occurred by necessity. The Christ had to suffer in order to enter his glory. Here we have a hint at the 'determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God' (Acts 2:23) by which Jesus is taken and crucified. We have a sense of the absolute requirement of the death of the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for human sin. So not only is this the death foreknown by God it is, as the Reformers would have pointed out, necessary in a strict logical reading of that word.

When the three walkers reach Emmaus, Jesus is constrained by two of them to join them. He is not forcing his company upon them, as he never does, but in response to their urgent request he remains with them. This, again, can speak to our own position: in response to our urgent request, he is prepared to remain with us. As he remains with them and, later, after they have realised who he is and recognised him, they make the dangerous night journey back to Jerusalem and say to themselves 'did not our hearts burn within us' (Lk 24:32) as he expounded the Scriptures. So, we have here the structure deposited in their burning hearts subsequent to the presence of Christ. We could say that he leaves the Scripture with them when his presence is no longer with them. The Scripture is what is going to impel them forward and is going to shape their lives and their teaching and preaching. We have here a way of understanding how the presence of Christ is given in order that Scriptural understanding might follow.

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For the video, click the link on [www.cte.org.uk/Forum2018/afterwards](http://www.cte.org.uk/Forum2018/afterwards)