

## THE EMMAUS ENCOUNTER, LUKE 24:13-35

March 24, 2015

H. Van Dyke Parunak

### A. Introduction

"If only I had been there." Have you ever wished that you could have been there at the first Easter, to look in the empty tomb, to hear the angel's announcement, to see the risen Lord? To judge from the reaction of the early disciples, we probably would not have seen things as clearly then as we do now, with scriptural hindsight. The material evidence was incredibly ineffective in persuading the disciples that the Lord was risen. Yet in the end they were persuaded, and in the strength of that persuasion, they changed the world.

If the physical circumstances did not persuade them, what did? And how can our faith in the risen Lord be strengthened, we who have no access to the empty tomb and the angelic message? We can find answers to these questions in the experiences of two early believers who met the Lord on the afternoon of the first Easter.

[Luke 24:13-35]

### B. Background Information

1. *Whom do we meet?* Two disciples. At least one of them, Cleopas (24:18), would have a long and intimate understanding of the Lord's teaching and ministry. He is probably:
  - a) Clopas the husband of "the other Mary" (John 19:25),
  - b) Alphaeus (another Greecization of the same Aramaic name) father of James the Less (one of the apostles), and
  - c) according to tradition, brother of Joseph the foster-father of the Lord.
2. *Where were they going?* Emmaus, 24:13, 60 furlongs = 6.75 miles, 11.2 km, from Dave Nelson's to Westgate Shopping center. About a two hour walk. (20 km was a day's journey for a soldier.) The actual site of the village is not definitely known today.
3. *What were they doing?* Talking, rather animatedly. v.15 has the flavor of a debate; v.17, "what are these words that you hurl back and forth at one another?" They are confused about what has happened, and sad (v.17). Hardly the image of faith!

### C. Three Steps to Belief

Compare v.16 with v.31. At first, their faith is so weak

that they do not even recognize the Lord. Finally, they do believe. Of interest to us is the steps they go through. What is it that persuades them? On what does our faith rest?

1. 19-24, Their own experience does not persuade them.

- a) They knew the Lord's teaching; they are very close to him, perhaps among the 70.
- b) They thought he was the Messiah, 21. Notice the form of the Lord's answer in v.26; he assumes that they are talking about the Christ.
- c) They heard the reports of the empty tomb, though apparently had not visited it themselves.
- d) We may envy the access they had to the empty tomb, but it did not persuade them. Physical manifestations and miracles are not the basis of our faith. Cf. John 20:1-15.

2. 25-27, The scriptures do not persuade them.

- a) The Lord rebukes them for not believing this evidence. He does not fault them for questioning their experience, but goes beyond the experience to the scriptures. Even before the events of the weekend, they should have known, on the basis of the Word of God. Cf. John 20:9, "knew not," probably in the sense of understanding.
- b) Led their "hearts [to] burn within" them, v.32. Faith begins to awaken...but only begins.
- c) We often say, "How wonderful it would have been to be along on that walk." The PB's named their main Bible school after Emmaus. But the scriptures, even from the lips of the risen Lord, were not enough for them to recognize him. The scriptures, by themselves, are not enough to save! Heb. 4:2.

3. 30-31, 35, The Lord's personal touch does persuade them.

- a) v.30, the sequence {take; bless/give thanks; break; give} is common in the Lord's ministry.
  - 1) Lord's Supper: Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19
  - 2) The 5000: Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16 (John 6:11 is different).
  - 3) The 4000: Matt. 15:36; Mark 8:6
  - 4) They had perhaps been present on one or more of these occasions. They recognized him by his familiar action.
- b) What is unusual here is that he does it in their house, with their food! Did they invite him to give thanks? Or did he just do it?
- c) Cf. John 20. The empty tomb and the gravecloths still leave

them doubting, but when the Lord speaks to Mary, she responds.

- d) So in our lives, the Lord touches us personally. Salvation is not just us coming to him--it is him coming to us! He speaks to us in some personal way that we can understand, and suddenly the pieces fall into place. The scriptures make sense. It is no longer just history, archaeology, and literature--it is the Lord Jesus personally with us.

#### D. **Summary**

The Lord is Risen! This fact is the cornerstone of our faith. Never missing in gospel presentations in the NT.

1. This is a historical fact--the tomb is empty. But the empty tomb is by itself not enough to persuade us.
2. The OT prophets anticipate this resurrection. But their promises are by themselves not enough.
3. The reason that these two don't by themselves bring faith is that we are dead in trespasses and sins, and dead men can't believe! So, in our evangelism, we need to be careful not to push. Present the facts and the scripture, but don't be surprised if people don't respond.
4. We believe in the resurrection because the Lord touches us personally. He speaks to us in a way that may seem insignificant to others, but that cuts through the haze and touches our hearts directly--as the grace before meal with Cleopas and his companion; as Mary's name in the garden. And with that key in hand, suddenly the prophets make sense, and the empty tomb becomes more than a relic. Our faith does not rest on archaeological findings or exegetical proof, but on the direct intervention of God in our lives. He has saved us, raised us up together with Christ, and thus (and only thus) do we believe in the resurrection.