

COMMUNING WITH THE LORD.

[LUKE 24:13-35](#).--APRIL 21.

**"Did not our hearts burn within us
while he talked with us by the way!"**

"A LITTLE talk with Jesus, how it cheers our lonely way!" writes the poet, and who that is a Christian has failed of this experience? And fortunate are those who early learn, that while we should greatly appreciate our privilege of talking with the Lord, in prayer, we are to recognize that it is not this that brings the full blessing; but our attentive hearing, understanding and appreciating what he says to us;--the Word of Truth. Our hearts burn while *he talks* and we listen, more than when we talk even to him.

Toward evening of the day of our Lord's resurrection, two of his followers, one of them apparently Simon Peter (*vs. 34*), the other Cleopas, passed along the country road leading from Jerusalem to Emmaus, about eight miles distant, evidently the home of Cleopas who would entertain Peter, whose home was in Galilee. Like all the followers of Jesus they had been greatly exercised and perturbed by the remarkable events connected with our Lord's last visit, in connection with the Passover--his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the cleansing of the Temple; the routing of his ecclesiastical foes in debate; his remarkable teachings during those few days; his arrest, trial and crucifixion. The excitement of their hearts made other business for the time impossible, and they spent the day in Jerusalem probably without knowing just why, except that they desired to be in touch with fellow believers. They shared with all the Lord's friends in the considerable excitement, resulting from the reports given by the sisters who went to embalm our Lord's body, that the tomb was empty and that they had seen angels who said that Jesus was alive again.

Full of the subject so close to their hearts, they were discussing in animated conversation the likelihood and unlikelihood of the reports they had heard, and in general the Messianic hopes of themselves and their nation, which they had trusted would have been amply fulfilled by Jesus, whose death seemed to throw all of their expectations into confusion. It was at this juncture that Jesus was drawing near them, disguised in a body of flesh and ordinary clothing--with a face different from what they had previously recognized, yet nevertheless gentle, soothing, sympathetic. He inquired the occasion of their discussion, which seemed to be respecting some sad subject. This kindly interest was not resented as an intrusion, but rather their burdened hearts rejoiced to find a sympathetic ear to which their perplexities could be related. How much of human nature there is in all this! How favorable is a time of adversity and perplexity in which to approach those whom we desire to assist; but how necessary it is that we should learn of the Master how to approach with such sympathy in word and act as to gain the hearts of those whom we would serve and bless. Love is the secret of gentleness, of sympathy, of all real heart-helpfulness. In order to be more useful in life, the Lord's people need to become more and more filled with his spirit of love;--copies of God's dear Son.

It was no deception on our Lord's part to inquire what things they were sad about, altho he knew everything [R2801 : page 134] better than they. It is sometimes the part of wisdom not to tell all that we know, if we can the better help others by inquiring of them. In this instance we can see the wisdom of our Lord's course, for the minds of the two travelers were lifted from any points of disputation and drawn to a general review of the circumstances of the preceding days, and this furnished the best foundation for our Lord's exposition of the meaning of and the reason for the things which perplexed them.

Jesus did not reply to their surprised expression that he must be a newcomer in the city not to have heard of the wonderful things that had recently transpired. He let them proceed to declare their faith in him and how

they viewed the situation. The portion of their conversation recorded implies clearly that however much their confidence might have been shaken respecting our Lord's Messiahship, and their hopes, that it would have been he that would have redeemed (delivered) Israel from the Roman yoke and exalted her as God's agency, the seed of Abraham, for blessing all the families of the earth, they still believed in him as a great Teacher, a prophet--"mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." This was a good confession, all that could have been asked, and quite sufficient for our Lord to use in rebuilding their confidence in himself, in his Messiahship--on a surer, a better, a more positive foundation.

[R2801 : page 135]

While it was expedient for him to start the matter by questioning them, it would not have been wisdom to have continued thus to any great length; for he had the message, they needed the instruction: we, as his followers, may learn a lesson from his course in this also. As soon as he had their minds in the channel to receive the lessons he would give them, he began to *open* unto them the Scriptures concerning himself--to expound them, to show their true meaning and fulfilment. We here see the proper course of the teacher illustrated by the great Teacher himself. As he went to the Scriptures and brought forth from them evidences of divine foreknowledge and prediction respecting the things that were transpiring before their eyes, so we, if we attempt to teach others, should not be content with offering our views, our opinions, our conjectures, but should search the Scriptures and be able, from that source to give to every man a reason for the hopes that are within us--that his hopes, as well as ours, may be built up, not upon the theories of men, but upon the inspired teachings of God's Word. Higher critics, Evolutionists, etc., never follow the method which our Lord Jesus here emphasized as the proper one: on the contrary, denying any special inspiration of Moses and the prophets, they ignore them, and offer instead, as of superior value, their own conjectures. Let us not only ignore such teachers as blind guides, attempting to mislead the Lord's flock, but let us also, to whatever extent we have opportunity to teach others, see that we follow not in their footsteps, but in those of our dear Redeemer. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word there is *no light* in them." ([Isa. 8:20](#).) And those who follow such teachers as have "no light" are sure to get further and further into darkness.

We are not informed what features of the Law and the Prophets our Lord enunciated; but we can surmise that he pointed out to them in Moses' writings various features of the Law which pointed to himself as the paschal Lamb, whose death must take place before the first-born and all Israel could be delivered from the bondage of sin, and from the great task-master, prefigured by Pharaoh, and be led ultimately into the Canaan of promise. We can surmise that he recalled to them Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, the typical seed of promise, and how this represented the actual death of Messiah, the antitypical seed, the Son of God. We may presume that he called their attention to various of the psalms, which prophetically spoke, not only of the glories of his reign, but also of his sufferings and his death, and his subsequent exaltation to the right hand of the majesty of God. No doubt he called their attention also to the utterances of Daniel the Prophet, respecting Messiah's being cut off in death, but not for himself. Undoubtedly he reminded them of the words of Isaiah, that Messiah should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, be despised and rejected of men, and how, nevertheless, in due time God would set him as his King upon his holy hill, Zion.

Spellbound with this wonderful exposition of the divine Word, his listeners drank it in, realizing its truth by the manner in which it harmonized the various testimonies of God's Word--nor did they think for a moment of inquiring of their teacher whether or not he had an ordination from the scribes and Pharisees, with a license to preach. They perceived that he had a divine ordination, and this was fully attested by his ability to make clear to them what other teachers could not make clear.

The eight miles of the journey seemed all too short, as they reached their home, and they were loath to part with the wonderful teacher, whom they supposed they had fallen in with by accident, never dreaming to what extent divine providence was guiding their affairs. It was drawing toward evening, and the stranger was

bidding them adieu, as tho intent upon a further journey; and indeed, he surely would have gone from them had they not been sufficiently appreciative of what they had already heard to constrain him earnestly to remain with them and partake of their hospitalities. So it is with all of us, as the Lord's disciples whom he is instructing, after we have been taught of him. If our hearts fail to burn with responsive love and zeal and appreciation, the blessing will pass from us and we will fail to reach the climax of joy in a full recognition of who our Teacher has been. While the Lord draws nigh to us with his grace and truth, without solicitation, he passes us by unless his message is appreciated so that we shall constrain him, urge him to abide with us, to continue the conversation--unless we shall proffer him in turn our hospitalities, our temporal things, in endeavoring to make some slight recompense for the spiritual favors showered upon us.

Our Lord accepted their urgent invitation and remained; supper was prepared, and recognizing their new acquaintance as a great teacher or prophet they requested that he should return thanks for their evening meal. It was while he was thus asking a blessing upon it and upon them that the eyes of their understanding were opened--it dawned upon them that their guest was no other than Jesus himself! Perhaps the language used in the blessing was such as they had heard him use before, or perhaps in some other way their understanding was opened.

Having accomplished his purpose, our Lord vanished from their sight. Thus, in addition to the instruction impressed upon their minds, he showed them by this vanishing that he was no longer the *man* [R2801 : page 136] Christ Jesus--that he was "changed"--that the resurrected Jesus was a *spirit being*, who could come and go like the wind, as he had explained to Nicodemus ([John 3:8](#)), appearing and disappearing, as he had never done previously, but as angels had frequently done. Moreover, they realized from this illustration that our Lord could appear in any kind of a body, and with any kind of clothing, as might best serve his purposes. They did not know him by the marks in his hands and his feet, nor by the seamless robe; for he had not appeared to them in these, but in *another form*, as an ordinary traveler whose features they did not recognize. Had he borne the prints of the nails in his hands and his feet they surely would have noticed them during their long walk; just as Mary would surely have noticed them when she grasped our Lord by the feet. But they had an explanation of the whole matter now; they understood why this stranger had been able to present the divine word with such clearness and force and beauty as to cause their hearts to burn with fresh love and zeal and hope. They were glad.

Let us pause here to note some of the conditions which evidently led up to this blessing, that we may apply the same to ourselves, realizing that our Lord operates very generally along the lines of fixed principles, and that if we would be the recipients of his special favor and instruction, and have our hearts burn with the spirit of his truth, we should expect such experiences along somewhat similar lines to those observed in connection with the two who went to Emmaus. We remark, first, that this is an illustration of our Lord's promise that where two or three are together in his name--considering him, his word, his promises, his blessings--there he will be in the midst, and a blessing shall result. This may be in a country road, in the home circle, or in the more general gatherings of the Lord's people for worship, prayer and study of the truth. How this reminds us of the injunction, "Forget not the assembling of yourselves--and so much the more as ye see *the day* drawing on." Who has not noticed the blessing that comes to those who remember these promises of the Lord's Word, and who act upon them? Who has not noticed in his own experience, as well as in that of others, the danger of neglecting these admonitions--the danger of doubts, fears, indifference, coldness, worldliness? It is undoubtedly true today, as much as or more than ever, that we need such fellowship, and it is to such who seek it that the Lord reveals himself.

Let us mark again the word of the Prophet, "They that feared the Lord *spake often* together; and the Lord hearkened and heard it," and noted it in the book of remembrance. Let us remember, too, that it is declared of such, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels." ([Mal. 3:16-18](#).) We are not saying that others will not be the Lord's, nor does the Lord say so; but we may be well assured that those [R2802 : page 136] who have opportunities for meeting together and speaking together, and who fail to use

the opportunities, are manifesting a lack of interest in our great salvation; and that such are very likely to lose the remainder of their interest, and failing of the Lord's instruction given to such, that they may fail also to be amongst the "jewels" whom he will gather. If on the contrary one feels little interest in the heavenly things, little disposed to discuss the features of the divine plan and its promises, and happy only when conversing on worldly matters, business, etc., it is an unfavorable sign. The Lord is not likely to approach such and open their understanding respecting the Scriptures, as he surely is pleased to do to those who are hungering and thirsting after truth.

Many are so situated that they are unable to gratify the desires of their hearts in respect to assembling frequently with others of like precious faith, to talk over the good things of the Lord's Word of promise; but the isolated should not feel disappointed that the Lord's Word says that he will meet with the twos and threes, and does not promise the same to the solitary. They should rather look about them to see what provision the Lord has made whereby at least two can meet and discuss his Word together. We suggest, dear friends, that the Master has made special arrangements for all of his people in this respect in our day; for all, the world over, who so desire may have such a meeting at least twice a month, through the regular visits of the WATCH TOWER--and he that hath no money has the same opportunities as others (as will be seen by the terms on the second page of each issue). We believe this is a divine provision for the necessities of many, and we urge that all avail themselves of this as well as of every other privilege the Lord may grant for fellowship, for communion in spiritual things. The written message is not different from the spoken one.

The Editor of this journal, through its columns, is pleased to meet with those of the Lord's people who desire fellowship and communion respecting the Lord's Word; and the reading of expositions of the Scriptures in the WATCH TOWER differs nothing from hearing the utterance of the same words by any living person who might meet with you. We claim no infallibility for our presentations, nor do we simply offer our opinions and conjectures, after the manner of the scribes and Pharisees; but rather after the manner of the great Teacher, we seek to present to the minds of those interested the teachings of Moses and the prophets, and to voice the testimony of Jesus and the apostles, and to show the harmony of the Scriptures.

[R2802 : page 137]

As soon as the Emmaus brethren recognized their guest, and he vanished, they understood well the meaning of the joy, the refreshment and the burning zeal in their hearts which his expositions of the truth had inspired. They had thus a confirmation of the words of the angels to the sisters in the morning, that Jesus was risen. The news was too good to be kept, even until the next morning. They must and did start immediately for the city, altho it was a journey of at least eight miles. How different their feelings as they set out in return from those when they left the brethren at Jerusalem, their hearts sad and their minds full of questionings! Now they were full of joy; for they saw that our Lord's crucifixion, so far from being the end of their hopes, was really the foundation for them; that as our Lord explained, "Thus it behooved Messiah to suffer before he would enter into his glory"--that unless he had suffered--died--the race would not have been purchased at the hands of Justice, and the condemnation of death would still rest upon it and make any permanent blessing impossible; but now, the redemption price having been paid, the way was open, first for the reconciliation of the Royal Priesthood who should be joint-heirs with Jesus as the Seed of Abraham, and subsequently, in God's due time, would follow the times of restitution of all things, the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Some such thoughts as these engaged them as they returned to Jerusalem, and arriving at the upper room found the eleven (except Thomas--the term "eleven" being used in a general sense, and not a particular sense, as referring to the apostles in general and not to the exact number) with others of the company assembled. Then there was general rejoicing in the information that Jesus had revealed himself to Peter, as they related their joyful experiences, and how the Lord had been known to them in the breaking of the bread and the asking of the blessing. Doubtless it was this experience that led subsequently to the custom of the disciples having a meal in common on every first day of the week, at which they again in imagination recognized the

Lord present in their midst, blessing the bread and opening the eyes of their understanding. Thus each first day of the week they called to mind how he opened unto them the Scriptures and sought to keep the eyes of their understanding open and to grow in grace, in knowledge and in love.

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