

THE SAVIOUR . . . who disguised Himself
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(MARK 16:12; LUKE 24)

The Emmaus story is among the best known of the Scriptures, but our familiarity with its details is apt to interfere with our understanding of its more serious teaching. Four questions are suggested by this stimulating account, (i) Why were the disciples going to Emmaus? It is worthy of note that apart from their contact with the Saviour, the journey was a waste of time. Their purpose in visiting Emmaus was unfulfilled, for they returned almost immediately. (ii) Why did they fail to recognize the Lord Jesus? (iii) Why did they enjoy the Stranger's sermon when its opening statements charged them with great folly? (iv) Why did they return at such a late hour of the night, and thus prove the inadvisability of their walk to Emmaus?

The Strange Road

Calvary had completely ruined the hopes of the disciples. These delightful people had followed Christ because they honestly believed He would establish the Messianic kingdom. Every day they witnessed new manifestations of power, and they never questioned the imminence of His coronation. When He surrendered to His enemies and was led forth to be nailed to a cross, their hearts turned to stone. Weary and despondent, they began making plans for the future, and ultimately two of the company decided to return home. Their walk into the country took them away from the cross; their backs were toward the sanctuary, and every step was one taken in the wrong direction. The Emmaus road has had many travellers, for embittered men have often made a contemporary Judas an excuse for backsliding. In the greater issues of life, the Emmaus road is a cul-de-sac and not a highway.

The Strange Redeemer

"And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" (Luke 24:15-16). Had Christ revealed Himself immediately, and commanded their return to Jerusalem, they would have obeyed instantly; but their most intimate difficulties would have remained. There was very much more at stake than their return to the holy city. Recurring problems had ruined their peace of mind, and a strange unrest had conquered their hearts. In order to deal with these hidden troubles, the Lord Jesus disguised Himself and drew near. "He appeared in another form" (Mark 16:12). And thus He was able to handle the difficult task of revealing to two headstrong disciples the fact that they were capable of making mistakes.

The Strange Reaction

His sermon had an inauspicious beginning, and could never be a pattern for ministerial students. He began by calling His audience "fools." Yet in some mysterious fashion His message was delivered in a delightful way that made their hearts burn. We believe literature would have been enriched immeasurably had Christ's sermon been preserved for posterity. He systematically expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, and His utterances cheered their drooping spirits. They had never heard such a message, for it proved that the cross would

THE SAVIOUR . . . who disguised Himself become the beacon from which radiant happiness would shine out to a world. They had been wrong in all their conclusions. The Lord Jesus touched the trouble-spot in their agitated souls; but without His disguise, this would have been impossible.

The Strange Return

When Christ accepted their invitation to supper, the scene was set for their greatest surprise. As He broke the bread, "they knew Him by the nail prints in His hands." Then their plans were instantly changed, as they desired to rejoin the brethren. The loneliness of the road, and the dangers of the night, were unable to keep them in Emmaus, for "they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem." The darkness of their night of sorrow had given place to a dawn, and they desired to spend the new day in fellowship with the people of God. And as it was, so it is. Man is never so stupid as when he journeys away from the cross. A tent at Calvary is better than a palace in Emmaus.

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