

IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

The Towns and Cities of Jesus’ Day

Jesus appeared to many after His resurrection from the dead. One of the most well known appearances takes place on Easter Sunday evening when the Savior walked with two men who were on their way from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus.

Review the Scriptures from Luke 24:13-35

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Emmaus

Beyond this Bible story, we do not know much about the village of Emmaus where Jesus ate with these two disciples. Scripture tells us that it was located 60 *stadia* from Jerusalem (between seven and ten miles), but we do not know in which direction it lay. No less than four locations have been brought forward as possible sites.

The traditional site of the village is the city of *Amwas* which lies west/northwest of Jerusalem on the road to modern day Tel-Aviv. A memorial to the Biblical event was erected here as early as the 4th century AD, making this tradition a fairly old one. In the 12th century, the crusaders identified *Abu Gosh* (northwest of Jerusalem) as the spot and later in the 15th century. Then the village of *Qubeibe* was named. In the 1st century the historian Josephus claimed the village of *Qaluniya* (west of Jerusalem) as the spot.

Each location presents it's difficulties.

Amwas - It has an ancient tradition but is 160 stadia from Jerusalem – too far away for the village mentioned in the Bible and probably too far for the disciples to have returned to Jerusalem that night as the Scripture indicates.

Abu Gosh - Although it is the correct distance from Jerusalem, it had no historical tradition for being the actual place until the time of the crusaders, suggesting that the crusaders just assumed it was the village mentioned in the Bible because it was only one still standing at that distance.

Qubeibe - This city was offered as a possible location only very late in history (14th century).

Qaluniya - While Josephus lived in the first century and so was fairly close to the event, the distance to this village is wrong. It is only 30 stadia from Jerusalem. (Although one source claimed he gave the correct distance, so it is hard to tell.)

It is in the village of Amwas that the tradition of the Emmaus disciples has found its deepest roots, even though it is unlikely to be the actual location. In 1967 the area around Emmaus (Amwas) was destroyed by the occupying Israeli army and a forest was planted there called Jewish Canada Park. There is a movement at present to rebuilt the towns in and around Amwas and allow the refugees to return. Regardless of the location and inhabitants of the ancient village, Jesus' famous lesson to the two men who lived there rings in our ears centuries later.

Jesus and the Emmaus Disciples

Learn and discuss this Easter evening lesson?

What was the attitude of the men walking when Jesus came and appeared with them? (v17). What had led to this attitude?

Did they have any reason to feel this way? Do you think at first they had a misunderstanding of Jesus' work? Were they looking for the 'right' kind of Savior or salvation?

What had the Scriptures told them about Jesus that they had forgotten?

How did Jesus respond to their concerns?

Why do you think He responded this way rather than showing them immediately who He was?

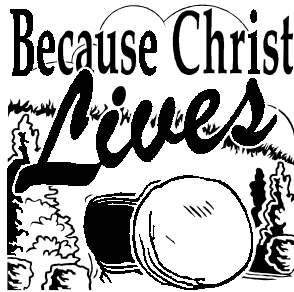
What was it that actually led the disciples to understand and recognize what Christ had done for them?

What is it that leads *us* to understand and recognize what Christ had done for us?

What indication do you have that by the time Jesus was done speaking to them, they fully believed He had risen from the dead? (vv28-29).

Do we have to see the Lord Jesus face to face in order to believe and trust in His resurrection and in the salvation He gave to them?

What does the resurrection of Christ mean for you and your faith?
(Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:20-23; Rom 1:4)



WHERE WILT THOU GO SINCE NIGHT DRAWS NEAR?

Where wilt Thou go since night draws near,
O Jesus Christ, Thou Pilgrim dear?
Lord, make me happy, be my Guest,
And in my heart, oh, deign to rest.

Grant my request, O dearest Friend,
For truly I the best intend;
Thou knowest that Thou ever art
A welcome Guest unto my heart.

The day is now far spent and gone,
The shades of night come quickly on;
Abide with me, Thou heavenly Light,
And do not leave me in this night.

Enlighten me that from the way
That leads to heaven I may not stray,
That I may never be misled,
Though night of sin is round me spread.

And when I on my death-bed lie,
Help me that I in peace may die.
Abide! I will not let Thee go.
Thou wilt not leave me, Lord, I know.

(The Lutheran Hymnal No. 197)

Resources

<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2001/20010906.htm>
<http://www.palestineremembered.com/al-Ramla/Imwas/Story260.html>
The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia Samuel Fallows, ed.