

FURTHER INTO THE TRINITY – ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

In Revelation 1:8 Jesus says,

“I am the Alpha and Omega; who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

A shocked and shaken John had to be re-assured that this was indeed his Lord so in verse 17 Jesus tells him,

“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

In another way the apostle John also played an alpha and omega role. If not the first disciple called to follow Jesus, he was among the first, he was the first male to enter the empty tomb and in a chronological way was to write the opening verse of scripture, John 1:1-2, which takes us back to a time earlier than the creation record in Genesis,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

In the omega sense John was to easily outlive all the other disciples.

In the light of all this, the Old Covenant and the New Testament must be the two parts of a continuing story about the execution of a one-time plan rather than about plan A that went terribly wrong, followed by plan B that will hopefully work.

Well known Trinitarian author, Graeme Goldsworthy, writes,

According to Jesus, the Old Testament is the Word of God, the Scripture that cannot be broken. Jesus also claims that he himself is the subject of the Old Testament. His teachings constantly point to the Old Testament as that which he fulfils. Thus the Old Testament does not stand on its own, because it is incomplete without its conclusion and fulfilment in the person and work of Christ. No part of it can be rightly understood without him. In this sense it is about Christ..

God’s revelation in Scripture is progressive, moving by stages from the original promises given to Israel, until the fullest meaning of these promises is revealed in Christ. While we come to understand the New Testament in the light of what of what goes before it in the Old Testament, it is God’s fullest revelation and final word in Christ that gives meaning to all things. Thus Christ, and therefore the New Testament, interprets the Old Testament.

These words of Goldsworthy serve well to give substance to the event often referred to as The Road To Emmaus and recorded in Luke 24:13-34. An understanding of this passage is an important tool in coming to grips with Trinitarian theology. It’s vital scripture that identifies the Jesus of the Old Testament and connects him to the Jesus of the New Testament. If we are ever to be of use to any newcomer seeking to learn of the ways of God, it is imperative that we possess this kind of knowledge.

Whilst of itself, theology plays no active part in salvation, correct theology is vital to the good understanding to the ways of God. Even in secular life, no employee can profitably serve his employer unless he has a good general knowledge about the one he serves and of the services he offers.

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So before taking the time to highlight the major points of the passage let us set the context for what could be described as the most enlightening Bible study ever held. It instantly changed the lives of two men from despondency to joy, and left them with a hope that they were to cherish for the rest of their lives

It is in the late afternoon of the day of Christ's resurrection. The crucifixion had ended the hopes and dreams of his disciples. The long awaited Messiah had failed to physically deliver them from Roman oppression as expected and seemingly, died in disgrace at the hands of his enemies. His followers were left despondent, dejected and devastated. Three years of their lives had been wasted and now there was little option but to try and pick up the lives and occupations they left to follow a born loser. Rather than be bitter, they deeply mourned the death of the one that they had grown to love. Little did they know of what was about to unfold.

As we pick up the story we find a relatively unknown, called Cleopas with an un-named companion headed for a small village called Emmaus of such insignificance that today; its location is no longer known. Perhaps this obscurity is intentional to prevent readers from straying from the startling truths soon to be revealed. As we shall see, the passage is about Jesus and about what he is about to say, which in no way, is influenced by his audience or the location in which it is told.

But curiosity killed the cat; so what detail can we glean from other references or by simply putting two and two together. Over the centuries the Road to Emmaus mysteries have been much discussed and widely written on, without the emergence of any conclusive answers. However it can be an intriguing, yet futile, exercise but as a point of interest let us spend a little time on some of the speculation that has been tossed around.

We know the names of his inner circle of disciples, often referred to as the Twelve, and that the name of Cleopas was never included therein. However, there are references to Jesus having 120 dedicated followers at the time of his death so it seems logical to suggest that although Cleopas was not one of the Twelve, he was probably one of the 120. Other outside sources point to the possibility of Cleopas being an uncle of Jesus.

That leads us to ask, who was the second disciple or follower? Certain scriptures appear to give the answer but fail to stand up under closer scrutiny, Take for example the latter part of Luke 24:34,

“It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”

Taken in isolation that strongly suggests that the Apostle Peter is that second or un-named disciple. That is, before carefully reading the preceding verse,

They got up at once and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together.

That rather suggests that Peter had remained in Jerusalem all that day.

Other speculation has it that the so called Simon, was the son of Cleopas and that they were returning to their home in Emmaus after the spring festival. This speculation seems to be given further credence by the fact that the two disciples were in a position to ask an unknown stranger to stay the night with them. Such speculation could be right, or it could be wrong. To this point the answer has not been revealed and because it is not important in the overall scheme of things, it may never be.

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Now let us turn to the scripture, Luke 24:13-33

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] 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.

It is hard to imagine a more unlikely backdrop to what was to follow. Two unknowns, on their way to an unknown destination, with an unknown reason for going there, being unexpectedly overtaken by an unrecognisable stranger. How could anything important ever emerge from that?

Mystery leads to more mystery. While the disciples puzzled over the identity of this stranger we, the readers, are left to puzzle over how Jesus hid his identity from them. Whilst they perhaps had not seen him as often as the Twelve, now reduced to Eleven, they must by the demands of their belief, spent much time in his presence. Even if his features had been changed by his ordeal, his voice should surely reveal the truth of his identity. Like the disciples we are left short on answers and at least for the present, must be content with Luke's explanation, **"But they were kept from recognising him."**

But what's so new about this? I wonder how often we have failed to recognise his presence when Jesus has intervened in the difficult times of our lives. Let's take a moment to reflect on the inspiring words of the poem we know as Footprints in the Sand.

**One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints.
Other times there were one set of footprints.
This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life
When I was suffering from anguish, sorrow, or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.**

**So I said to the Lord, "You promised me, Lord,
That if I followed you, you would walk with me always.
But I noticed that during the most trying periods of my life
There have only been one set of prints in the sand.
Why, When I have needed you most, you have not been there for me?"
The Lord replied,
"The times when you have seen only one set of footprints
Is when I carried you."**

Perhaps we have more in common with those two disciples than we first thought. Rather than wander too far off the track let us again pick up Luke's account in verse 17,

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 the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

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Cleopas and his companion were dumbfounded by Jesus' first question. The events of the week-end had been so dramatic that they had become the automatic topic of conversation in and around Jerusalem. Surely he must have known! Just was Jesus up to?

As we will see later, the mission of Jesus was to lead them to truth and understanding. Without doubt, Jesus knew what they were discussing but asks them to express their thoughts, in their words, so that he could build his answer around them. It was the saddest of times, but even such times leave room for a little humour. Consequently Jesus may be finding a degree of pleasure in prolonging the suspense of his audience. Now back to the story,

“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 morning²³ 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 they did not see Jesus.”

The mystery immediately deepens. A body disappears after a crucifixion! Surely, all this is stranger than fiction! And where had this stranger been these last few days? All of Jerusalem and surrounding were buzzing with the events of the last few days when a charlatan, claiming to be the King of the Jews, had been tried and found guilty of blasphemy and subsequently hung on a cross. Nothing like that had ever happened in Jerusalem before.

At least the presence of this stranger gave the disciples temporary relief from all that troubled them so deeply. Even the request to tell their story, with the need to gather their thoughts, brought a degree of peace and calm. Even we, as modern day readers, can learn much about the understanding, or lack thereof, of the disciples from their remarks.

Although they had intently listened to every word spoken by Jesus prior to his death, his most ardent followers had never really understood the things he told them. And so it was with the two disciples in question. Although we are not told what they believed, it seems that they did not fully believe the testimonies of the two Mary's. In fairness to them they may have left for Emmaus before the women told the other disciples that they had seen the risen Christ on two separate occasions. Chronologically, the meeting on the Road to Emmaus was the third appearance of the resurrected Jesus Christ, yet the first to male followers.

Contrary to what he had told them, they spoke of their hope in Jesus as the one to physically redeem Israel from Roman oppression. Moreover, he had gone to great lengths to explain what must happen to him. Obviously it had all fallen on deaf ears. Rather than see the cross as a victory, the hopes of all his followers had been dashed by his death as they were left pondering their future. The reality seemed to be that they were left with little option but to pick up the threads and resume the simplicity of their former lives. Their story was one of heart break and abandonment.

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And what of Jesus, as he listened to their story of woe? Obviously he would have felt deeply for the ones he loved so dearly. Sadly, they had not really believed in the past; would they believe what he was about to tell them? The scene has been set for the greatest Bible study of all time to commence. Cleopas and Simon are about to have their minds blown wide open verse 25,

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah 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.

There it is in a nutshell, just two verses, but what a treasury of vital knowledge they summarise. Depending on the resource used, there are more than 300 references to the Messiah in the Old Testament including up to 60 prophecies. Of all the 66 books of the Old Testament I could find only 3 that do not have identifiable references to the Messiah.

It began with a soft admonition for being such slow learners but the sting from that quickly subsided as he gave meaning to the things that their Master had told them. Who was this stranger who knew so much, far more than any rabbi they had come across with the exception of Jesus himself? Why had they not heard of him before? They were enthralled, as his every word seemed to be pregnant with meaning.

There was so much to be told and obviously Jesus could not cover it all in the time available to them. Perhaps he began with the scriptures that traced his lineage through the centuries? Jesus made it clear that the Old Testament predicted His coming. He said to the religious leaders of His day. ([John 5:39](#)).

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.

Old Testament prophecies unerringly predicted the family line or genealogy of Jesus. God narrowed down the family line of the Messiah in such a way that eliminated all other people ever born.

Let us start with the prediction or prophecy that the Messiah will come from the family of Noah's son, Shem. ([Genesis 9:26,27](#)).

He [Noah] also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant"

Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. God eliminated one third of humanity when He said the Messiah would come through the line of Shem .Luke records the fulfilment in. ([Luke 3:36](#)).

Now move to the prediction that Christ will be a descendant of Abraham. ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)).

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"

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Here God eliminates all the families of the earth but one—the family of Abraham. Whoever claims to be the Messiah has to be a descendant of Abraham. The fulfilment is recorded in ([Matthew 1:1](#)).

The Apostle Paul, emphasized that God specified one from Abraham's line would be the Christ. ([Galatians 3:16](#)).

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to the seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your seed,' who is Christ'

Next it is predicted that he will be a descendant of Isaac. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. God promised Isaac that the Messiah would be through his family line. ([Genesis 26:3,4](#)).

Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed

Matthew records the fulfilment in. ([Matthew 1:1,2](#)).

Next the Messiah will come from the family of Jacob, ([Genesis 35:11,12](#)).

God also said to him [Jacob], "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Scripture says that the chosen line was through Jacob. This continues to narrow the possible candidates for the Messiah.

Matthew records how this was fulfilled. ([Matthew 1:1,2](#)).

Jesus was also to come from the line of Jacob.

Next we are told that he will come from the tribe of Judah; ([Genesis 49:10](#)).

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples

Jacob had twelve sons. God eliminated 11/12 of the line of Jacob by saying the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Jesus descended from the line of Judah as confirmed by. ([Matthew 1:1-3](#)).

The next prediction is that the Messiah will be from family line of Jesse [[Isaiah 11:1](#)]

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit

There were many family lines in the tribe of Judah, but only through the family line of Jesse could the Messiah come. He is the Branch that will bear fruit. Again Matthew records how this was fulfilled. ([Matthew 1:1,5](#)).

The ultimate prediction: The long awaited Messiah will descend from the house of David. Through Nathan, the prophet, God spoke to David; ([2 Samuel 7:12](#)). God told David the Messiah would be from His line:

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom

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Jesse had at least eight sons. God eliminated 7/8 of the sons of Jesse when He said the Messiah would be through the line of David. Finally, the list of potential candidates is narrowed to one family line. The fulfilment is recorded in the very first verse of the New Testament. ([Matthew 1:1](#)).

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the son of Abraham

Of all people born up to that time, Jesus alone, was the one who matched the criteria laid down by God and further more, since the Jewish genealogical records were destroyed in 70 A.D., along with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple,, it would not be possible for a imposter who was born later to prove his lineage back to David and thus fulfil this prophecy.

Further confirmation is given by the angel who appeared to Mary announcing Jesus' coming birth .[Luke 1:31-32](#);

You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of His father David.

If needed, further proof is available, through the linking of numerous other scriptures in many other ways. Along the way, there have been many amazing and unpredictable twists and turns, like the human trickery of Jacob and the most unlikely selection of David who appeared to be completely overshadowed by his elder brothers. But through them all, the will of God prevailed.

It seems that the stranger on the road to Emmaus would have first established his true identity to those two disciples, but prophecies about him abound to such an extent, that his options were almost unlimited. He could have told a similar story to mine by linking a host of other scriptures. Perhaps he took them to the prophecies that seem so obscure until it is revealed that they are about Jesus. Or perhaps he referred them to specific prophecies surrounding the time of his death and stressing the importance of their precise fulfilment in order that the integrity of the word be preserved.

Let us return to the rood to Emmaus; resuming in verse 28;

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on 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.

Because of the intense interest, it must have been a slow walk, but eventually the disciples reached their destination. In a tongue in cheek type of manner Jesus walked on, all the while, knowing that he would be called back. When the call came he went with them on the understanding, of the disciples, that he would stay the night. Through the fact that they had the authority to extend an invitation further suggests that, at least, one of the two lived there. Be that as it may; they wanted to know more and Jesus had much more to say to them.

Picking up again in verse 30;

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?”

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The moment of truth had arrived. Jesus reveals himself to them. The reason why, we know; but as to the how, we are not told. That just adds to our bag of mysteries. As for Jesus it was a matter of a job done, and a time to go. As for the disciples initial response! Perhaps it could be re-phrased to read something like; ***“From the start we realised that here was someone special, without knowing how special.”***

And on to their secondary response verse 33,

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.”

Chances are the trip back to Jerusalem, with hearts transformed from despair to joy, was much quicker than the outward journey. They just had to pass this wonderful news on to the inner ring of disciples and as they were expressing their obvious disbelief Jesus suddenly stood in their midst. According to Luke verse 37;

“They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.”

As they began to regain their composure he invited them to restore their limited belief by making a physical inspection of his resurrected body. Once satisfied it was time for a spiritual lesson, verse 44;

“This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and Psalms.”

So at long last they were to believe! No longer did they doubt that Jesus was the Lord of Abraham and David, just as he had been their Lord until his untimely death and is our Lord today.

All of the 300 or even more references to Jesus, had to be authenticated to prove the Bible as a book of pristine truth. Even the slightest hint of failure would rob it of its virtue. Today we give praise that none has ever been found although many of them have been fulfilled in the strangest of ways at the most unexpected of times. The chances of them all being accurately fulfilled makes the parting of the Red Sea seem little more than a minor miracle.

A Bible scholar expresses it this way;

The Old Testament, written over a 1,000 year period, contains over 300 references to the coming Messiah. All of these are fulfilled in Jesus Christ Many of the prophecies concerning the Messiah were totally beyond human control:

By using the modern science of probability in reference to just eight of these prophecies --- the chance that any man might have lived to fulfil all eight prophecies is one in one hundred trillion! The chance of any one man fulfilling all of 48 prophecies is one in 10 to the 157 power.

Although the prophecies about Jesus have been fulfilled, many of his promises are yet to be given substance. Judged by past performances, it seems certain that we could safely add a further 1000 zeroes to the figures already given, against the failure of their fulfilment.

Only then, can the greatest mystery book ever written be closed. In awe we await its climax!

Before celebrating our Communion service let us sing.

I love You For Ever

COMMUNION

We have left the road to Emmaus, entered the house with Jesus and the two disciples and find ourselves seated at the table with them just after they had eaten. We pick up the narrative at a point I deliberately skipped over in the message, Luke 24:30;

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight.”

In the Old Testament, the term, breaking of bread, usually referred to a full meal being taken together, but in the New its meaning narrows and almost always refers to the Communion remembrance. For example Acts 2:46;

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.”

But back to the table!

Here we have Jesus repeating what he had done just a few days earlier on the eve of his death. To think that he would do that, and encourage the close followers he had left behind to do likewise on a regular basis, must surely destroy the argument of those who claim it to be no more than an annual remembrance.

All that remains is for us, as a unified group, to follow their example,

First Blessing

Loving Father we give thanks for the opportunity given this small group, to as one, partake of this bread and reflect on the wondrous works of your beloved Son. Each time we do so, our appreciation of how he gave up his all, so that we might live deepens, and becomes, our one remaining hope in this darkened world. Amen.

From the vantage point of the cross we have two views. To look back on the finished work of Jesus as we have just done, or to look forward to the fulfilment of all the promises that he has given to us. As we partake of the wine, the blood of the New Testament, let us choose this latter option and be left with the same joy and peace as experienced that day, in that house, on the road to Emmaus.

Second Blessing

Loving Father as we drink this wine that symbolises both the shed blood of the one we love and the power of His, and our resurrections, we look forward to the restored world that has been promised. A world so different to the one in which we live. We give thanks for the hope that has been left within us as we patiently wait for the glorious days that lie ahead. Amen