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*Holiness Writers*

# **THE EMMAUS ROAD**

By

*Leewin B. Williams*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

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# **THE EMMAUS ROAD**

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Published by  
Pentecostal Publishing Company  
Louisville, Kentucky

1946

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# THE EMMAUS ROAD

Leewin B. Williams

## LUKE 24

And behold two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

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.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk, and are sad?

And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

## THE EMMAUS ROAD

(Pronounced Em-MAY-us)

It was late in the afternoon of the first Easter day. Two disciples, restless with sorrow, went out by the western gate to walk to the village of Emmaus, some six miles distant. No doubt life and light throbbed in the soft wind, in the gentle scenery. Perhaps the birds were still singing as the sun was slowly sinking over the western hills. All nature must have been glad. But the hearts of these disciples were as heavy as the clods of the grave. Their Lord was dead!

We are not told why this journey was made, we can only surmise. Events of great concern had taken place in Jerusalem. Their Lord, their Messiah, the hoped-for restorer of Israel, had been crucified, put in a tomb, their company scattered. Probably they were returning home, not having elsewhere to go.

Why should these disciples be sad on a day which millions now celebrate with great joy? Their storm clouds had not passed sufficiently for them to see the rainbow of hope. A glorious day had

broken upon the world, but they did not know it. Their disappointment had become a grief so heavy that faith was eclipsed.

The resurrection of our Lord stands out as the greatest mountain peak in the world's history. From this event, truly, there is a "radiance streaming." There had been other great days in the world's history. It was a great day on creation's morning when the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7). It was a great day when the Law was given on Mount Sinai. God testified by thunder and lightning and a thick cloud, the voice of the trumpet sounding exceedingly loud. The Lord descended upon the mount in fire, the smoke ascended and the mount quaked greatly. (Ex. 19). It was a great day when the angel choir gathered over the Judean hills and announced to simple shepherds and that the world's Redeemer had been born. Thus, it seems, that God has come across the universe a few times, using this earth as one would the stepping-stones across a rippling, brook, and when he does touch the earth there is always a great manifestation.

But to what purpose would all these great manifestations of God to the world be to you and me, if the Roman seal had never been broken from Joseph's new tomb; if some mighty angel had not come down on that first Easter morning and rolled the stone away from the door of our Lord's sepulcher; if Christ had not come forth and walked with saddened disciples on the road to Emmaus? For, "if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain . . . ye are still in your sins." (1 Cor. 15).

These disciples in the bewilderment of fresh bereavement, talked drearily -- of him, his great life, his piteous death, of all that was precious and all that was confusing to them in his history; of the failure of his purpose, of the ruin of their hopes and of his. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this today is the third since these things were done." (Luke 24:21). Time, the balm that often cures the sorest plague, had not come to their relief. They walked the Emmaus Road, they talked; but we are not told they prayed.

A Stranger joined them as they were walking and entered into their conversation. They thought him a very ignorant man, though he had not that appearance, for he questioned them minutely about the life and death of their Rabbi. Could there be a foreigner in Jerusalem who had not heard what had happened? They answered him with a sort of surprised condescension, but they readily began to talk about their Lord; indeed, they could not speak of anything else. As they strolled and talked, their feelings about the Stranger underwent one of the swift transformations which simple minds experience in the presence of superiors. This was no ordinary tourist. This was a master of knowledge. He spoke of the Hebrew Messiah; of the meaning of ancient poetry and prophecy; of the possibilities of the race hidden in the Scriptures. He spoke of the recent events that had shaken Palestine. He asked, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

The two disciples felt deeply drawn to the Stranger. It never occurred to them to ask his name or from whence he came. Their thoughts took a higher turn; they seemed to be awakening from an unpleasant dream with the glad thought that it was not true. Courage and faith swept back upon their despairing hearts like fire from heaven upon an abandoned altar. They clung to the Stranger that, when he would have left them and passed on up the country road, they could not, would not, have it so. They begged him, nay, they compelled him, to turn aside and accept their hospitality. So he

indulged them, and went to supper with them in their simple house of entertainment. There it seemed the only right thing for him to do was to take his place at the head of the table: his hosts did not seem to wonder why. It seemed to be wholly expected that he should ask the blessing of God upon the bread. He fulfilled the promise: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20).

It may be that he raised those nail-pierced hands as he blessed their simple meal, and the disciples for the first time caught sight of two of the five bleeding wounds received on Calvary. Slowly it began to dawn upon them that they were in the presence of their risen Lord. How did this recognition come about: Was it of the mind or of the heart? Was it of the senses or of the spirit? Had they been blinded or deafened? Had he changed or was it they? Like so much else that had been inexplicable, this, the utmost mystery, now yielded to his control. And they who loved and mourned a dead Christ, lifted their eyes and perceived that he was alive! Oh, the intensity of emotions that surged in their souls! Surprise, Joy, Hope -- all struggling for expression. Food now had no value! They knew, as John the Revelator many years afterward on the Isle of Patmos, heard him say: "I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Rev. 1:18). "Their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Oh, but was not this a disappointment? No; this further convinced them that this was the same miracle-working Lord they had before known.

Briefly, we have followed one of about ten recorded appearances of Jesus after his resurrection. There are incidents and utterances connected with each appearance which would form interesting and profitable themes for meditation. In these we obtain a key to some of the darkest problems of humanity. Thus, the Stranger led the two to see the true meaning of the prophets, whose burning words they had often read and heard without grasping their real deep meaning. In this incident, Christ led them to see that he must be a suffering before he could be a triumphant Messiah; that the crucifixion of Jesus, over which they wailed with such bitter anguish, was in fact an essential part of the councils of God. Then he went on to show that, as his suffering was now fulfilled -- for the crucifixion and death were past -- nothing remained of that which was written in prophecy, but the entering into his glory.

The fact that Christ has left the world, ascended up on high, and now sits at the right hand of God, does not render our fellowship with him impossible. Fellowship of souls does not consist in the proximity of persons. There are millions who live in close personal contact, dwell under the same roof, eat at the same table, and work in the same shop, but between whose minds there is scarcely a point of contact, whose souls are as far asunder as the poles; while, contrariwise, there are those separated by oceans and continents, aye, by the mysterious gulf that divides time from eternity, between whom there is a constant intercourse, a delightful fellowship. Through his works, his word, his spirit, we can now hold fellowship with our blessed Lord.

The special teaching of the journey to Emmaus, and all that befell the two, shows us that Christ may be with us, but unrevealed; that Christ is teaching, but personally unrecognized; that by entreaty Christ may be revealed and recognized. Saint Mark tells us (16:12) that he appeared in another form, one with which they were not familiar. Not the form of the Shepherd going before them, but that of the Companion in walking and working clothes traveling by their side. We are told also that "their eyes were holden that they should not know him." They were not at that time in spiritual light; their

vision was narrowed by their great sorrow. Are not these still the reasons we so often do not see the Christ who is with us as we travel along the roads of life? He is not in the form in which we expect him. We miss or mistake him because we cannot see beneath the form, because our minds are self-occupied, or we fail to hear his voice because the noises of the world are beating too heavily upon our ears.

He sent his disciples away in a little ship on one occasion while he departed into the mountain to pray. It grew dark, the night wore on, the winds were contrary; while apart from them, yet he saw them toiling in rowing. He went to them, walking upon the sea, and apparently would have passed them by. They saw him as a spirit, a ghost --not their loving Lord. The approach was unusual; they cried out in fear. He drew near and sayeth unto them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." At another time the disciples were in a ship at sea. There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. Jesus was asleep on a pillow. The disciples were alarmed and rudely awoke him, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Little did they did the realize that their frail craft could never sink so long as they had Christ on board.

Troubles often come when Jesus is away. Death entered the little home of Mary and Martha in Bethany. Lazarus, their brother, had died. The sisters sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick; but Jesus tarried yet four days, seemingly indifferent to the distress of those he loved. When he returned, Martha reproachfully said, "If thou hadst been here, our brother had not died." She seemed to think that Jesus could help only when near in person, but not at long distance. The promise, "God is a very present help in trouble," had been forgotten.

If our faith remains unwavering, he is with us, bearing the heat and burden of our journey. It is he who is touching the springs of our thoughts and actions. It is he who is speaking to us, though in a still small voice. Fear not, thou weary and heart-sore disciple, when thy comforts seem to be gone, the Comforter is close to thee.

"Oh, that faith might never waver,  
Oh, that love would long forbear;  
Hope should point to yonder meeting,  
Perfect love and trust are there."

The fellowship of the disciples was exquisitely delightful. "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked to us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" they said. They had left Jerusalem with very heavy hearts; their hopes concerning Jesus seemed to have been frustrated; they were sad victims of disappointment. Peter had said, "I go a fishing," and the influence of his words caused others to say, "I go, too." Though that day was one of the brightest that ever dawned upon the world, the day when death was conquered and its scepter broken, yet to them it was dark. The outward sun may have shone brightly and the scenery around may have been beautiful, but they were heavy hearted. Their hopes had been largely of a material kingdom. They asked many days later, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Their hearts had been set upon the material, a brilliant kingdom such as the Jews enjoyed under the reign of Solomon, and they occupying important positions of state in that kingdom, that they failed to discern spiritual things. As the Stranger talked to them, they remembered how their hearts did burn with gratitude.

Thus will not Christ's communion with the soul today make the heart burn with gratitude, adoration and hope?

Mary Magdalene had looked on and at first failed to recognize the Person of her adorable Master. (John 20:15). So also by the lakeshore, as he stood and spoke to the tired and unsuccessful fishermen, they who had been so long with him, yet at first they did not know him. Some mysterious change had been wrought in the Person of our Lord. Between the resurrection and the ascension, men at times looked on him without a gleam of recognition. They must now gaze on him until they were placed in something of spiritual harmony with the Lord. "Beholding him we are changed into the same image from glory to glory." "The pure in heart shall see God." Men do not recognize the Christ today because sin has blurred their vision. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14).

It would seem that the Master was grieved that professed disciples should be so dull of understanding. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" He seemed to say to them: "See, In the pages of our prophets all this, over which you bitterly mourn, is plainly predicted; you must be blind and deaf not to have seen and heard this story of agony and patient suffering in those well-known, well-loved pages." We are at times, no doubt, grieved and perplexed at the providences of God. If we only knew the Scriptures better, we would find consolation in the rich promises contained therein. Who has not found comfort, when going through deep trials, in the words of Paul: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28).

A freight car that needed repairs was set out on a little-used sidetrack where it remained for a number of days. While the workmen were engaged with the repairs, a little sparrow built a nest inside the car, laid her eggs and began brooding over them. The workmen wondered what would become of the bird when the work was completed. After a few days they noticed that the nest was full of little birds, and the mother bird was busy gathering food for them. About this time the car was finished, and orders came to place the car once more in the service. The workmen told the trainmen about the little birds, and in turn they became much interested to know what would become of the helpless birds when the car was joined with others in a long train, and started down the road. At the first station, the trainmen made an inspection and found that the mother bird had stayed with her nestlings. This so aroused their sympathies that they wired the superintendent of the system about the matter. Back came a message from the superintendent telling them to set the car on a siding and let it remain there until the little birds were able to care for themselves. If a great railroad system can be so ordered to protect a few helpless sparrows, is it hard to believe that the great Superintendent of the universe orders all things for the good of his children? "Are ye not worth many sparrows?"

The fellowship of the disciples with Christ was subjected to a painful, though providential, interruption. "And he vanished out of their sight." whither he went, or how, it is not stated, but all at once they missed him. Momentarily, there must have come a great change over their feelings. It was as if the summer sun fell at once from its zenith, and left the world in darkness and dismay.

Fellowship with Christ here is often subject to interruption. The bright clouds pass from Tabor, and the mountain is covered with sackcloth. Many things serve to interrupt our fellowship with Christ -- secular concerns, physical infirmities, material tendencies and evil suggestions. These, like a brood of evil birds, may be found, if permitted, in the heart, and prevent our communion with our Lord. We are sometimes slow to learn the simple lesson Jesus taught about the sower who went forth to sow. There is stony soil, shallow soil, thorny soil; but there is also the good soil. We determine which it shall be with us.

On one occasion our Lord asked a question of one of his disciples, and of that question it is said, "This he did to prove him." (John 6:6). There were other occasions, such as that of the blind beggar by the wayside, and that of the Syro-Phoenecian woman, when Jesus said things to prove or try those who came to him. We see the same thing here. He drew near to those disciples in the guise of a stranger; he chose to remain unknown to them; he drew them out as if he were one unacquainted with the events which were filling their minds and hearts; he induced them to discover themselves freely and fully both to his own eyes and to theirs. Moreover, he was in the act of passing on, and would have gone beyond Emmaus if they had not availed themselves of the opportunity of persuading him to remain. And thus he tried them. "The trial of your faith is precious." This trial of faith and love and loyalty, forms a great part of our Master's dealings with us. At times Christ seems to us other than the kind, gracious, pitying, faith-rewarding Master that he is. We may ask, "Why does God let such things happen to us? Why does not Christ bring to pass that for which we so earnestly labor and pray?" It may be that he is proving us. We shall be stronger, and our lives will be more fruitful for his seeming to pass us by.

In the world as it madly rushes by, we are apt to forget that we need the close fellowship of Christ. It matters not whether we are on the Emmaus Road, or the busy roads of our own making, he will draw near to his disciples and teach them lessons today just the same as he did on the first Easter day. The gospel of Jesus Christ is just as needful, just as powerful today as it has ever been. Jesus Christ has the answer to every problem of life, whether in home, church, or nation. When men have tried all the vain philosophies of the world, when they have cried, "Peace, peace," organized leagues, entered into covenants, and exhausted all their powers of education, legislation, and resolution, they will still find that sinful human nature is ever the same. There must be the transforming power of Divine life in the heart of the individual before wars will cease.

We are taught in this story the true way to make the Sabbath a delight. It is fitting that on the first Sabbath day of the Christian era there should be recorded an instance in which the day was spent as Christ would have it spent. Here we have communion with our Lord; searching the Scriptures; sitting down to the table with him. What beautiful lessons, what a beautiful example, of the manner in which he would have us spend our Sabbaths! No doubt, so engaged were the disciples as they journeyed that the village houses of Emmaus appeared to their vision much sooner than they expected. The way was marvelously shortened that afternoon. Likewise will our communion with our Lord make the hours go swiftly on wings of holy and elevated joy, and we shall call the Sabbath a delight.

Revelation always prompts and demands action. When the shepherds heard the glad news that the Savior was born, they said, "Let us go, even unto Bethlehem." These disciples, after the Lord had



vanished out of their sight, said, "Let us go to Jerusalem." "They arose the same hour and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord has risen indeed and appeared unto Simon." The last command our Lord gave before he led his disciples out to Mount Olivet and ascended to heaven, was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." Go, carry the Good News to every nation! The greatest News the world ever heard. Jesus Christ has arisen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. Carry it on every breeze. Ye streams that go dancing to the seas, sound it forth! Ye torrents, that thunder in your awful plunge, give it voice! Ye soft skies, wreath yourselves in smiles and weep tears of joy! Ye silent voices of nature, whisper it to the winds! Ye winds, carry it upon your wings the world over! Ye seraphs bear the News until earth's remotest bounds shall hear the story of our Lord who was dead buried, but rose again and ever liveth and walks every Emmaus Road with his disciples.