

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Comrades in Arms – 13-19 February 2016

Christ, from the early days of His ministry, did not work alone, He had disciples. This week's Lesson calls them 'comrades in arms' – a term not used in the Bible – rather they are "brethren" – those who, even though they struggled in faith, were crucified with Christ. Christ continued teaching them. After His resurrection, Christ still opened the Scriptures to His disciples: "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

The disciples, brethren, that worked with Jesus were a devoted band of followers that had gathered round Himself. They were human; hence we are not surprised when occasionally traces of selfishness appeared, and they strove to see who should have the best place in the Master's kingdom; but no one can say that with the exception of Judas, they had attached themselves to Him on the mere hope of personal gain. Undoubtedly they were attached to Jesus on His own personal goodness and loveliness. They loved Him for what He was. He satisfied all the longings of their souls, so much so that when, grieved on the departure of many who had seemed dedicated to Him, He asked the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" they replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68).

On the night of the trial of Jesus, and the disciples, "they all forsook Him and fled" (Mark 14:50); but this was because things had suddenly happened contrary to what they were expecting, and they were panic-stricken. One by one they returned, and all followed Him to Calvary, and assisted in taking Him down from the cross, and laying Him in the tomb. Thus, having done all that could be done for the dead before Friday's sun set, they returned to their dwelling, "and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).

But they could not long remain away from the place where they had left the loved One. Their hopes had perished, but their love remained unchanged. They supposed that He had been mistaken as to His mission; but they knew He was good. So as soon as possible after the Sabbath was passed some of the women started in the early morning for the sepulchre.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:1-9). We want to focus on verse nine for the remainder.

"They knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Why did they not know the Scripture that foretold the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Because they did not believe when they read. For this explanation we have the authority of Christ's own words to the two disciples with whom He walked to Emmaus the day of His resurrection. After they told their mournful story, Jesus said to them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken;" and then, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

There was no lack of Scripture evidence concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Thus Paul declared that in all his preaching he had said "none other things than those which prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people" etc (Acts 26:22-23).

Christ, speaking to the disciples who still doubted after they had seen the sepulchre, and had heard the testimony of those who had seen Him, said unto them: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto

them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24:44-46). Moses had written of the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head. He had also recorded the promises to Abraham, – promises which could not possibly be fulfilled to Him except by the resurrection of the dead; and every Jew was familiar with the words to which God affixed His oath: "Thy Seed shall possess the gate of His enemies" (Genesis 22:17). David had written, not of himself, but prophetically of Christ, and in His name: "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell [grave]; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew Me the path of life" (Psalm 16:9-11). The disciples had all these Scriptures, yet believed them not.

Time and space would fail us to recount all that is written in the Psalms and the prophets concerning Christ; but in order that no shred of evidence might be lacking, God had placed on record the story of Isaac's birth, which was life from the dead; also the sacrifice which Abraham made in the calm confidence of the resurrection; and, more than all, many cases of resurrection from the dead showed Christ actually risen as well as slain from the foundation of the world. Everything spoke of Him whom the disciples had seen demonstrated to be "the resurrection and the life;" yet "they knew not" – how strange? No, it was not strange; for the same is repeated today by Christians. The disciples were certainly Christian; they followed Christ, and loved Him. But they believed not, and therefore they knew not. The Lord loved them; but although they were "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), they were not fitted to be teachers, as long as there was a vestige of unbelief left in their hearts; for how can one teach another what one does not know? and belief, – simple, complete, and faith which is sure that God's Word is true from the beginning, and that His righteous judgments endureth for ever, – is the only key to knowledge, for "Through faith we understand" (Hebrews 11:3).

Why did they not believe, and know? It was not because they were willful, or obstinately set on having their own way. They thought that they believed, and if anybody except the One who spoke with authority had accused them of infidelity they would no doubt have resented it, just as many Adventists will now; but they did not believe and know, simply because they had their own ideas of what was fitting and harmonious, and they read the Scriptures in the light (or darkness, rather) of their own opinions. They read the Bible to find backing for their theories, instead of coming to it with a mind willing to learn to be filled with God's thoughts.

Yet, many, even among Seventh-day Adventists, read the Bible with a settled conviction in their minds that the Bible does not mean what it says. When the Bible records that God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), our theologians say the Father-Son relationship is mere role-play, one took "the role of the Father, another the role of the Son" (Gordon Jenson, AR 31 Oct 1996); that "the sonship of Jesus, however, is not ontological, but functional" (Gerhard Pfandl, BRI 1999); that the Sonship of our Jesus "should be understood in a metaphorical sense, not in a literal sense" (Max Hatton, 2001) – they ally with Satan to "obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God" {TDG 128.1}. The Bible is clear: "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). Yet, many Seventh-day Adventists go everywhere but to the Bible for the meaning of the Bible!

This necessitates a 'system of interpretation;' different theologians create different ideas, so there are different systems of interpretation, and all tend to obscure the Son of God. Is there no need of teachers? Indeed there is. The gift of teaching is third in order of the gifts of Christ, and is above the gift of doing miracles (see 1 Corinthians 12:28). Teaching the Bible properly does not consist in 'interpreting' it by human wisdom, but in "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13) by "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11).

Christ inspired the Scriptures, and He is the great Teacher. On the road to Emmaus, "He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). He set the Scriptures so plainly before them that they could not help seeing them as they were, and, referring to the matter, they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" (verse 32). Let the Scriptures be opened. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light;" for they themselves are light; "it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130). What is necessary is that we should consider what the Lord says, and He will give us "understanding in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7). As He directed the disciples' minds to the Scriptures, Christ will give us understanding in all things.