

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

"I Walked With The Risen Lord"

by Cleopas

"My name is Cleopas. During my life upon earth I became a disciple of an extraordinary person whose name was JESUS. I first heard of him through one who was both my physician and friend. Luke was his name. He told me of some of the teachings of JESUS and of the miracles which he performed. I heard JESUS teach and with my own eyes I beheld him perform miracles. I became convinced that he was a prophet of the living GOD of Israel. At every opportunity I heard him teach about the living GOD.

"It was my constant amazement that the religious leaders of my nation did not recognize in JESUS a prophet of GOD. Surely he gave every evidence that GOD was with him. But the Pharisees, the scribes, and the chief priests hated him. We felt confident, however, that JESUS would overcome their opposition and that He would free our nation and establish the Kingdom of GOD. We felt that JESUS would redeem Israel.

"Little did I realize the intensity of their hatred. Finally they succeeded in bribing one of his own apostles. The Sanhedrin was called at night and the Court judged JESUS guilty of blasphemy. They took him to Pilate. He did not want to condemn JESUS to death. Such was the hatred of the religious rulers that they threatened to place a charge of treason against Pilate. So he yielded to their influence and ordered JESUS to be crucified.

"I was in Jerusalem at the time. I had traveled from my home in the village of Emmaus to Jerusalem in order to partake of the Passover Feast and also to be near JESUS. It was rumored that he was to be in Jerusalem. It was my hope that the leaders in Israel would recognize JESUS as a prophet of GOD. It was on the Sabbath that I learned that JESUS had been crucified on the day before. This news stunned me. I felt that all was lost.

"It so happened that I met Luke who was equally stunned with the terrible news that JESUS had been crucified. I asked him to travel with me to Emmaus on the morrow which was the first day of the week. He agreed. He did not know what to do with himself since JESUS was now dead. We could not leave early that next day as Luke had some business to perform and he wanted to

see Peter. So we left about noon.

"Luke was a man who could gather news. As we walked to Emmaus he told me more of the things that had occurred. He obtained some of his information from Peter. First he told me about Judas. He had sold the Master for thirty pieces of silver and betrayed him in the garden of Gethsemane with a kiss. Later he was filled with remorse and hung himself. I told Luke that is exactly what he should have done. How he must have pained JESUS with that kiss of betrayal.

"Then Luke told me that JESUS was further pained by the denial of Peter. Peter had boasted that he would never forsake the Master. But he denied him three times and also with curses. Peter, however, was brokenhearted about his denial and actually wept. He wished that it were possible to confess his repentance to JESUS. But, alas, JESUS is dead.

"I asked Luke to tell me what happened at Pilate's court. He told me that the people under the influence of the chief priests had called for his crucifixion. Pilate ordered him to be scourged. The Roman soldiers mocked him by pressing a crown of thorns into his head and pretending that he was king of our nation. I was amazed when Luke told me that JESUS prayed for the forgiveness of these Roman brutes as they were nailing him to the cross. I would have cursed them to their faces. But that is just like the Master. How often he prayed for those who spitefully used him. Luke was so filled with emotion that he could hardly tell me of the sufferings which JESUS bore on the cross.

"We were puzzled about a report we heard from Mary Magdalene and the other women. They went early to the tomb in which JESUS was laid. They found the tomb empty and beheld a vision of angels. I heard that John and Peter had investigated this story and found the tomb empty. We thought that someone had taken his body to another place. Whether it was a friend or an enemy we did not know.

"While we were discussing this mysterious event, a stranger joined us and asked: '**What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?**' I answered: '**Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?**' Evidently he did not know for he asked: '**What things?**'

"I replied to him in this way: '**Why, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. But the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. And we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea and certain women also of our company made us astonished, who were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.**'

"The man gave a rather rebuking reply to this information which I gave him. He said: '**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?**' Luke asked him what he meant.

"The stranger replied: 'I mean that Moses and the Prophets spoke of the sufferings of CHRIST. Does it not state in the first book of Moses: I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. The CHRIST is the seed of the woman. Before the seed of the woman could bruise the head of Satan, Satan would bruise his heel. CHRIST was to be bruised. And is it not true that Satan and his demons were present with all their cruelty at the crucifixion? Was not JESUS bruised?'

"Yes, JESUS was bruised. Luke and I acknowledged that Satan was in the hearts of Judas, the chief priests, Pilate, and the soldiers. Only under the influence of Satan could they be so cruel to him who did nothing but good. But did the Scriptures reveal that the Messiah would have to suffer in this cruel fashion? I asked him that.

"The stranger replied: 'The Scriptures do clearly reveal it. How were the Israelites delivered from the bondage of Egypt? Was it not by the blood of the Lamb spread upon the lintels and the door posts? Blood had to be shed before deliverance came to the children of Israel. And do not the Tabernacle and the Temple declare that truth? How is atonement made for the sinning Israelites? Is it not through blood? The High Priest cannot approach the Holy of Holies except through the shedding and sprinkling of the blood. Lambs are sacrificed daily for sin in the Temple. And then was it not John the Baptist who cried out at the sight of JESUS: Behold the Lamb of GOD who taketh away the sin of the world. Since JESUS was the Lamb of GOD how could he save the world except through the shedding of his blood?'

"He was exactly right about what John the Baptist had said about JESUS. It was Andrew, Peter's brother, who had told us about it. But this suffering on the part of the Messiah still puzzled Luke and me. Luke asked him how could it be that the Messiah would be betrayed by one of his own disciples and denied by another.

"In answer the man quoted from the Scriptures. He said: 'The Psalmist has declared: **Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.** That explains Judas. And Zechariah the prophet has stated: **I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.** That explains Peter - and also the other disciples.

"This convicted Luke because he was present at Pilate's judgment hall when the people cried out for the crucifixion of JESUS. He, too, was afraid to call out for his deliverance. This he confessed to the stranger and said: 'Oh, sir, I also deserted JESUS. But do the Scriptures say that the Messiah was to be spit upon and crucified like a common criminal?'

"Again the stranger quoted from the Scriptures. He replied: 'The prophet Isaiah said concerning the Messiah: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. Isaiah also stated that the Messiah was to be numbered with the transgressors. But if you really want to listen to the heart beats of the Messiah as they are prophesied in the Scriptures hear these words of the Psalmist David: **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my groanings? Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the**

Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may count all my bones. They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. These are the words of the Psalmist David and they are prophetic of the sufferings of the Messiah.'

"As the stranger quoted these words my heart was stirred. Because I loved the Master I had attempted to keep out of my mind the sufferings which he endured on that terrible cross at Golgotha. But these words of David made me realize the awful anguish of the cross. There was the scorn of the people who surrounded the cross like a pack of yelping dogs. How that must have pained JESUS. How horrible was the piercing of his hands and feet; the dryness of death; the disjuncting of his bones; and being forsaken by GOD whom he loved so dearly. Luke pointed out to me that the soldiers had gambled for the garment of JESUS even as the Psalmist had prophesied. But I still could not help thinking why it would be necessary for the Messiah to suffer in this terrible way. So I asked this man who had joined us as to the necessity of the Messiah's death.

"He answered: 'Moses and the prophets declare it was for the sin of the people. Moses declared that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Isaiah declared: **He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.** You ask me why the Messiah had to suffer. He suffered to pay the price of your sin.'

"The price of my sin? Then I began to see. It seemed as if scales were dropping from my eyes. JESUS shed his blood for me even as the sacrificial lamb upon the altar. His wounds on the cross were for my transgressions! He was bruised for my iniquities! Oh, the wonder of it all! - Just then we approached my home in Emmaus. We asked him to abide with us for it was toward evening and the day was far spent. To this he agreed.

"As he sat at meat with us, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to us. Then suddenly our eyes were opened and we knew Him: and He vanished out of our sight. Luke cried out: 'It is the Lord, Cleopas! It is the Lord! He is risen. And, oh, **did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?**'

"Immediately we determined to return to Jerusalem to tell the apostles. We almost ran all the way. We found the eleven gathered together along with the others. Before we could say a word they cried to us, saying: '**The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.**' Then Luke and I told our experience on our journey to Emmaus and how the Lord was known in the breaking of bread. How we rejoiced in the knowledge that JESUS was risen and is the Messiah. Yes, the Lord is risen. I walked with the risen Lord and knew it not. He opened the Scripture to us and I know now what a fool I was not to know that the Messiah had to suffer these things and thus enter into His glory. May the Lord open up the Scriptures to you; and then you, too, will walk with the risen Lord."

~ end of chapter 11 ~