

## Who was Cleopas in the Bible?

Cleopas was a follower of Jesus during His earthly ministry and among the few who saw the Lord on the day of His resurrection. Cleopas was not one of the Twelve, but some have surmised that he was one of the seventy (Luke 10). Scripture does not give us any details about Cleopas other than he and an unknown disciple saw the risen Lord on their way to Emmaus.

After Jesus died, His followers felt lost and hopeless. In spite of hearing Jesus teach for three years, many of them still had a limited understanding of who Jesus was and what He had come to do. They believed that Jesus had come to save them from Roman rule rather than to save the world from sin and death. So, when Jesus was crucified, they became despondent and fearful, despite the Lord's repeated pronouncements that He must suffer, die, and rise again (e.g., Mark 8:31). On the day of Jesus' resurrection, some women and Jesus' disciples Peter and John went to the tomb and saw that Jesus' body was missing (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-8), but most of Jesus' followers, including Cleopas, still did not understand exactly what had occurred (John 20:9).

The news that Jesus' body was not in the tomb traveled quickly, and, that same day, Cleopas and an unnamed companion were discussing the tragedy of Jesus' death and the mystery of His empty tomb as they traveled from Jerusalem to the town of Emmaus, about a seven-mile trip. The Bible says that, "as they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him" (Luke 24:15-16). Jesus had some things to teach the men without the distraction of their excitement and amazement at seeing Him alive.

As they walked, Jesus joined the men's conversation with a question: "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (Luke 24:17). Cleopas and his friend stopped, asking Jesus sadly how He could not know what had just happened in Jerusalem. Jesus was obviously not ignorant to the events Cleopas was referring to, but He inquired after them in order to lead these two followers into discovery. Cleopas' answer hints at the limits of their understanding, as in his explanation he refers to Jesus as a "prophet," although one who was "powerful in word and deed before God and all the people" (verse 19) and who they had hoped "was going to redeem Israel" (verse 21). Cleopas could not fathom the events of that morning, with its stories of angels and an empty tomb. As he had not spoken to anyone who had actually seen the resurrected Jesus (verse 24), it seems that Cleopas had defaulted to doubt.

Jesus chided Cleopas and his companion for their disbelief: "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25). Jesus then spent the remainder of the journey explaining everything that had been said about Him in Scripture, going all the way back to Moses and the prophets (verse 27). Jesus had often taught indirectly, through parables and comparisons throughout His ministry, but on this occasion He blessed these two followers with a step-by-step description of the Messiah's person and mission in a manner they could understand. The men were intrigued and thirsty for more, so, when they reached Emmaus late in the day and it seemed Jesus meant to journey on, they begged Him to come to their house and eat supper with them (verse 29).

At the table, Jesus did something His followers would have seen Him do more than once throughout His ministry: He took the bread and, giving thanks to God, broke it and started to hand it to Cleopas and his friend. It was then that the men were allowed to recognize Jesus; but at the moment of their revelation, Jesus disappeared from their

sight (Luke 24:30-31). They were amazed they had not recognized Jesus sooner, saying to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (verse 32).

In spite of the late hour, Cleopas and his companion immediately returned to Jerusalem to tell Jesus' disciples what had happened to them. As they spoke to the eleven disciples and the others gathered with them, Jesus appeared in their midst (Luke 24:36), confirming the testimony that He had risen from the dead.