

RHOS

RHOS is a dark-skinned, scrawny looking man with staring eyes. A confirmed bachelor, he comes from Janoah, North of Lake Huleh and South West of Caesarea Philippi. At home, Rhos is a casual worker who spent most of the season gathering papyrus grass on the marshes. He was one of the many who followed Jesus when they could. A seasonal disciple Rhos calls himself. That was how he happened to be in Jerusalem just before Pentecost. He'd met up with Philip who told him graphically all the story of Jesus' last days and about his resurrection appearances. Philip had invited him to join them in Jerusalem because he believed they were about to see the Kingdom come in greater power than they'd ever imagined.

Accepting the invitation, Rhos had been with the disciples when Jesus appeared and told them to go to the hill of the olive groves near Bethany. On the way home from the hill and from seeing Jesus ascend to heaven, Rhos tries to sort out his thoughts.

I still won't even pretend to understand. There is so much that's beyond me. For instance, his body. He seemed normal; he talked just as he used to - you could always tell he'd been brought up in Nazareth - he could eat with us - and walk about as we did; yet he could come and go mysteriously - and he WAS different - you never knew when he would be there. It could be a bit creepy, if it hadn't been him. Though there was no doubt about that for me. It was Jesus all right. Oh I know the rumours. And I suppose it does take some believing for those who've never seen him before. I may not have been the most ardent follower of the Master, and I may not be quite as bright as some, but I believe what he said. I believe he was God's son - and the Messiah. I suppose I'm fortunate. I might not have been so close to him, or seen what his disciples did, but I saw what a lot of these people didn't.

It all came back to me up on the hill. I realised what was different about him. I'd seen it before, back in Caesarea Philippi. It was the light - the glory - in his face!

We don't all get as close to Jesus as some do. Some of us are called to be seasonal disciples. After my experience at Caesarea Philippi I felt content to follow Jesus behind his chosen men. They would be given things to know and do that the likes of me never would. Some of us get to be content with what I call the after-glow - you know, the beautiful red skies after the sun slips behind the hills. We may not see the sun, but we know it's real and enjoy what it leaves behind. I felt that just now. When Jesus came, he looked radiant. His face seemed full of light.

He had that after-glow when I first saw him. He'd been with Peter, James and John - those three seemed to get closer than any. They'd obviously been sharing one of his prayer retreats in the hills. It's beautiful up there in the Spring with the forests and streams, and snow on the distant peaks. We were all waiting for him on the lower slopes. His other disciples were having a spot of bother. Old Gershom had brought his son in the hope that Jesus would heal him. Most people had never seen the boy before. Gershom and his wife didn't take him out much - for his own safety more than their pride. The lad could get the most devilish fits at times, especially in a crowd. Gershom obviously didn't want to be waiting around, so he suggested that Andrew and Philip should do the healing. Sadly, their efforts only seemed to make the boy worse. Tempers were getting a bit frayed when Jesus appeared. After the first shout - "he's here !" - you could feel the silence - everybody turned towards him. There was such a radiance about him. Peter told me later that it was nothing to what they had seen up on the mountain - they couldn't bear to look at him. It was like the pure light of God shining through him.

It was that same "glory-light" I saw just now as he walked through the olive groves and away into the clouds. On that other occasion at Caesarea Philippi Jesus soon had things sorted out, the boy healed, his men reprimanded for their lack of faith, and a lesson for us all on the importance of prayer for those sort of healing miracles. We felt that because he was there, God was there and all he promised about his Kingdom was possible. That's how I felt among the Olive groves. That's what he told us to wait for - power - his power. And he's promised to give it to us. He will, I know, because I've already got a bit of it.

When he left us just a while ago - the radiance on his face seemed to beam a great warmth deep into me. It was just like the other time. I know it's going to be so much more wonderful, and what he said then is true now - "only by prayer" he said, "Only by prayer". That's how we have to wait. I said the look of Jesus and what I felt inside me was like an after-glow at sunset, but on reflection I think it's more like the fore-glow at dawn. It's as though I've seen the glory of the first light on the horizon and behind it is the promise of a glorious sunrise. All the radiant glory of Jesus is going to fill the world. I believe it, and I'm determined to be around when it happens!