

Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives, Event #19b: After 8 days Jesus appears to Thomas—“be not faithless, be believing.”

Review of the resurrection *events* up to this point (I have narrowed down the *approximate* hour of the events based on sunset of Saturday, April 4, 33 and the sunrise of Sunday, April 5, 33; MM is Mary Magdalene):

- Event #1: Saturday, 5:45 p.m., April 4, 33: Two Marys go to “look” at tomb, Matt. 28:1.
- Event #2: Sunday, 3:00 a.m., April 5, 33: Earthquake and angel from heaven, Matt. 28:2-4.
- Event #3: Sunday, 4:00 a.m.: MM visits the tomb before daybreak, Jn. 20:1.
- Event #4: Sunday, 4:15 a.m.: MM reports empty tomb to John & Peter, Jn. 20:2.
- Event #5: Sunday, 4:30 a.m.: Peter and John run to the tomb, Jn. 20:3-9.
- Event #6: Sunday, 4:40 a.m.: MM returns to tomb & sees 2 angels, Jn. 20:10-13.
- Event #7: Sunday, 4:50 a.m.: MM sees the Risen Lord, Jn. 20:14-17.
- Event #8: Sunday, 5:00 a.m.: MM tells disciples who do not believe her, Jn. 20:18; Mk. 16:9-11.
- Event #9: Sunday, 6:00 a.m.: MM & other women go to tomb of Jesus, Mk. 16:1-3; Lk. 24:1-2.
- Event #10: Sunday, 6:30 a.m.: Women enter tomb; 3 angels, Mt. 28:5-7; Mk 16:4-7; Lk. 24:3-8.
- Event #11: Sunday, 7:00 a.m.: Women run in fear; Jesus meets them, Mt. 28:8-10; Mk. 16:8.
- Event #12: Sunday, 8:00 a.m.: Women went to tell disciples; soldiers report, Mat 28:11-15.
- Event #13: Sunday, 8:10 a.m.: Once again, the disciples do not believe the women, Lk. 24:9-11
- Event #14: Sunday, 8:30 a.m.: However, Peter runs to the tomb a second time, Lk. 24:12.
- Event #15: Sunday, 8:45 a.m.: Private meeting between Jesus and Peter, 1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34.
- Event #16: Sunday, 10 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Jesus & 2 travelers to Emmaus, Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-32.
- Event #17: Sunday, 5:00 p.m. The 2 travelers tell the 11 Disciples, Mk. 16:13; Lk. 24:33-35.
- Event #18: Sunday, 5:20 p.m. Thomas leaves; Jesus appears, Lk. 24:36-49; Jn. 20:19-25.
- Event #19: 8 days after the resurrection. Jesus appears to Thomas, Mk. 16:14-18; Jn 20:26-31.

We have already covered event 19. However, there are a couple of other issues I would like to touch on before moving to the next event. Event 19 records Thomas’s conversion. In the last essay I touched on just how obstinate he was *given the fact that He had been with the Lord and personally witnessed His miracles for years*. It is one thing for a believer living two thousand years after the Lord’s appearance to seek evidence; Thomas’s inexcusable skepticism is quite another matter.

The Bible emphasizes the fact that the reason people do not believe in God or Christ is because of negative volition. Negative volition includes the noetic effects of sin on a person’s thinking. At the end of the day, unbelief really is not about the evidence, it is about suppression of God (Rom. 1:18-32). As long as someone represses the truth of God, there is no amount of evidence that will convince him otherwise. You cannot convince someone who is in denial. In

denial a person interprets everything according to their own secular background—which never has room for God. Furthermore, as they repress Truth (“did not see fit to acknowledge God”) God hands them over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28).

Although belief in God is a natural result of the *proper function of the mind and the will*, the act of believing in Christ *is nothing short of the supernatural internal work of the Holy Spirit*. No one can believe in Jesus Christ apart from the internal enlightening and confirming ministry of the Holy Spirit—regardless of the evidence! Faith in Christ is a supernatural activity. All we supply is a willingness (spark of positive volition). It is the Holy Spirit Who accomplishes regeneration.

Although Thomas was a believer, due to negative volition in his life he was unable to believe in the *Resurrected* Lord. Let us never forget just how important the spiritual life is. Being in fellowship with God is not some little ritual we go through. When we are in fellowship with God, God is working in us and through us! It is God who provides the dynamics for our faith in those Grand Realities of doctrine. While it is often believed that the trouble with Thomas was not enough evidence, this is not what the Lord indicated: “Be not faithfulness, but believing” (John 20:27). What did He mean? He meant something like this: ‘It is not a question of evidence, Thomas; it is a question of disposition. Your incredulity is not due to your not having enough proof to warrant your belief, but to your tendency and attitude of mind (volition). There is plenty of light; it is your eyes that are wrong, and deep below most questions, even of intellectual credence, lies issues in the disposition of man.’

The ultimate truths of Christianity go beyond the mere knowledge of incontrovertible evidence. When the Lord said to Thomas, “become not faithless, but believing,” He is also demonstrating the two tendencies working in every believer. We can feed the tendency of doubt for the sake of doubt/skepticism and end up faithless or we can cultivate faith through the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God—“faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God,” Rom. 10:17.

There are two kinds of knowledge in respect to the Lord. There is the doctrinal knowledge and *then* there is the personal knowledge. They are connected; yet they are different. One is more academic and the other is very personal. God wants so much for us to have both kinds of knowledge. The most effective way God moves us from the academic propositional revelation to personal knowledge is through the tests of life. Like with Job, it is the tests of life that are designed to orient us not only to doctrine as per His promises but to Him in a very personal way. It was only through the tests that Job could really come to know God in such a fresh new way—Job 42:5 “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees Thee.” Job is not referring to physical sight here. This sight was the insight through the tests and the new doctrine the Lord had just given him. Suffering is often required, it was even required of the Sinless Christ: Hebrews 5:8, “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.” However, the good news is that we not only can draw closer to God, we can actually possess a supernatural joy even in suffering, cf. Philip. 4:4; James 1:2-4.

A couple more things on the two kinds of knowledge of God (rational and personal) and how different they are as well as the importance of doctrinal knowledge as a foundation. Say, for example, Jesus suddenly appeared before a group of people who had no doctrine and perhaps spoke a few words to them and then disappeared. Would they know Him better than if they attended a Bible class on Christology? No! Because they would all interpret Him according to their own background knowledge: e.g., He was an alien, or guru, or post-modern Christ. What if Jesus suddenly appeared before doctrinal believers at church? Would they know Him better? Yes, because they understand Who is standing before them. They would also have a different type of knowledge of Him as well: *very* personal knowledge. One day we will all be with Him

and when we see Esse, we will, for the first time, experience the beatific vision which will make everything else trivial in comparison. Every day we are one day closer to that event. Wow!

Back to Thomas: to his credit Thomas *decided* to believe and did so without reaching out his hand and touching. He not only believed, he did so on the deepest level, “My Lord and my God (John 20:28). Again, this is far beyond the mere *evidence* before Him—God!

Blessed,

Pastor Don

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,⁴ and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."