

Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives, Event #19c: After 8 days Jesus appears to Thomas—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

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.

There is one more issue in the nineteenth event that needs to be fleshed out. It is contained in our Lord’s statement: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). This is a grand beatitude that extends to all generations. Believing in Jesus Christ not only involves the *mind* believing in propositional truths. It is also an act of the *will* in trusting and resting in Him in a very personal way. One must know *what* to believe about the *Whom* before there can be trust in that *Whom*. There is intellectual activity that deals with facts and there is activity of man’s free will that deals with far deeper issues.

This blessing that came from the lips of our Lord deals with some very deep and core issues in man regarding His Maker. The modern fragmented man (with regard to Total Truth) often assumes that it is easier to believe if “we have seen with our eyes . . . and our hands have handled, of the (incarnate) Word of Life” (1 John 1:1)—such a view is erroneous.

Christ makes it clear that our generation, and all generations who have not seen Him, are not in a less advantageous position in regard to either intellectual belief or volitional trusting with the free will. Christ died and was resurrected twenty centuries ago, yet we can enjoy the forgiveness, the grace, and the fellowship with Him in no less way than those who walked the earth with Him. In fact, we can enjoy a fellowship these disciples were not privy too, namely the indwelling of Christ which was not possible until Pentecost with its gift of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

John 14:18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Colossians 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Man often thinks that belief that *rests* on sense is superior. This is patently and demonstrably false. Not only did Christ say that those who would *not* personally see the evidence of His physical body would be more blessed, I would posit that the most important things that you believe do not rest on any physical proof. As a matter of fact there is more physical evidence of the Resurrection that in all of your memories and experiences. What physical proof do you have of your past experiences and memories? Yet, I submit you cannot not believe in them. What physical proof do you have of other minds? None!

This is not to say that there is no physical evidence for God (cf. creation of the universe *ex nihilo*). This evidence is so abundant that man stands without excuse before God (Rom. 1:20). As far as the Resurrection, the historical evidence is so overwhelming that critical unbelieving historians/scholars acknowledge that

1. Jesus was publically executed and died on a Roman cross.
2. Jesus was buried in a tomb.
3. Jesus' tomb was discovered empty the Sunday after His burial.
4. Jesus' followers had no hope that He would be raised from the dead.
5. Women friends of Jesus had experiences of seeing Jesus alive from the dead.
6. Jesus' apostles had experiences of seeing Jesus alive from the dead.
7. The first Christians proclaimed in Jerusalem just weeks after Jesus' death that He had literally risen from the dead.
8. Paul, a persecutor of the Christians, converted to faith in Christ after an experience of seeing Jesus alive from the dead.

These facts coupled with the fact that every person has a *divinitatis sensum* (sense of divinity) in him and further coupled with the fact that the Holy Spirit is working on the soul of each man to convict him (John 16:7) explains why God holds man responsible. God knows what constitutes proof and has given that proof to man on the deepest level. Let's not kid ourselves: it is not just about empirical facts. Facts do not force *faith*. While facts are essential for faith—*empirical facts do not force faith*. It is a matter of the will. The will that does not want to believe will never believe even with faced with a flood of apologetics. The easiest thing in the world is to be skeptical, all it takes is to think: "I am still not [going to be] convinced"—even if the person is not able to explain away the historical evidence for the Resurrection or defend the self-creation of the universe. God makes it clear that it is not about empirical evidence. It is about

God Himself. People can make all kinds of excuses for not believing, but in the end God says they are without excuse. One common excuse used by the postmodern fragmented man goes something like this, “Well, other people believe in other gods,” as if because others believe in false things, that we are not warranted in our beliefs. Of course this is a non-sequitur –it does not logically follow. Aren’t you warranted in believing that your home is your home, your spouse is your spouse, and your memories of the past are valid *in spite* of the fact that there are some people who really are mistaken about where they live, their spouses, and their memories? The fact that others are wrong does not effect my warrant in believing who I am or where I live or who I am married to. I do have evidence of these things. However, even if I did not have physical evidence that my house was indeed mine or that I was married to Patti, wouldn’t I still be warranted in believing where I live and who I am married to? If you were accused of a crime and knew that you were home alone at the time but could not prove it, wouldn’t you still be warranted to believe that you did not commit the crime—even if CSI discovered evidence at the crime scene that pointed to you (that was planted)?

There is a staggering amount of evidence for God throughout the universe, but that evidence in and by itself will never move anyone to faith. Fred Hoyle, author of *The Intelligent Universe* (great book to read), frankly admits this, yet he will not believe. He says that he can’t bring himself to believe because of the way he was raised. Children who are raised only to look at things only from empirical perspective (“scientism”) may indeed have more difficulties, but God is always there for the willing.

Even if God did not see fit to give us all of this evidence confirming the truthfulness of Christianity and the Resurrection, we would still be without excuse for not believing for it is in the very nature of man to know there is a Maker of him and all that there is. It is such a blessing to have the evidence, but let’s not kid ourselves into thinking that we are autonomous creatures who can move into these *spiritual* realities on our own. It is God Himself who works within the willing to make His truths known—again, there is no excuse for rejecting Him. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can know that we live in Him and He in us, 1 John 4:13. The spiritual life is crucial! A life of grieving and quenching the Spirit leads to a life of doubt and inability to live in these grand realities. One cannot really know the most important things, like knowing that we live in Christ and He in us apart from life in the Spirit. Wow!

Blessed,

Pastor Don

