

Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives, Event #20e: “Do you love Me?” - The Five Loves (John 21:15)

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., April 5, 33: 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.
- Event #20: 2 weeks after the resurrection. Jesus appears on shore of Sea of Galilee, Jn 21:1-25.

Event twenty contains the Lord’s threefold question and Peter’s triple answer:

John 21:15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love (*agapao*) Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (*phileo*) You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" (*agapao*) He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (*phileo*) You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love (*phileo*) Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (*phileo*) You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

As one can clearly see in the passage above, the English translation “love” is used for two different Greek words (*agapao*, *phileo*). *Agapao* was the love that Christ was looking for, but Peter was primarily oriented to *phileo* love. There are five basic Greek words for love (these are not absolute categories; they are generalizations): 1) *Epithumeo* love, a very strong desirous love to be with someone as per intimate fellowship. It can be of a non-sexual or sexual nature. The strong desire or lust in *epithumeo* can be a sinful lust outside of marriage or bona fide lust and “undefiled coitus” in marriage as per Hebrews 13:4 (e.g., “lovemaking,” “cleaving,” “unity,” Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:8). 2) *Eros*, romantic love as illustrated in Song of Solomon—this is the love that exists in romance; 3) *Storgeo*, faithful and family love—this is faithful love for friends and family; 4) *Phileo*, rapport friendship love—this is the love for someone with whom you have great rapport. One has shared values and interests with someone in rapport love. *Phileo* love is a best friend kind of love; 5) *Agapao* love is divine love, unconditional love. This is the most powerful of all loves, and the backbone of all other loves. It gives stability and capacity for all of the other loves. *Agapao* is the love God the Father possessed for the world in giving up His Son (John 3:16). *Agapao* love is from God and is not inherent in man (1 John 4:7, “Beloved, let us love (*agapao*) one another, for love (*agape*) is from God; and everyone who loves (*agapao*) is born of God and knows God”). *Agapao* love is all-forgiving (1 Pet. 4:8).

Peter was stressing *phileo* friendship love because he averred a higher love, but the Lord kept referring to *agapao* love—that divine love that must be the foundation of *phileo* love (which the Lord finally conceded to in His last remark to Peter in this exchange). *Phileo* love is a mature special friendship love with God. It is the kind of love that Abraham achieved in maturity where he is called “a friend (*philos*) of God,” James 2:23. A believer reaches this *phileo* friendship love when there is a great deal of rapport between him and the Lord (because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit keeping the old sin nature in check, and because of shared divine viewpoint due to doctrine in his soul). However, one cannot get to *phileo* rapport love without first grounding his life in *agapao* divine unconditional love. Apart from this unconditional love, the believer can become very critical of God. When we are in fellowship, the Holy Spirit produces *agape* love in us (Gal 5:22). When we are living in this love (with its relaxed mental attitudes) and difficulties come our way, we do not become antagonistic toward God or His plan. As we grow in God’s *agapao* love, we can advance into rapport love like Job *after* the tests.

Agapao and *phileo* loves between the believer and God can be illustrated in marriage as well. *Mutatis mutandis*, two believers who are married who undergird their marriage with *agapao* unconditional spiritual love will be able to weather the misunderstandings and disagreements and advance into *phileo* rapport sharing love as best friends. However, consider just how hard it would be for two believers to keep their marriage growing if they marry with merely *phileo* rapport love? What happens to the love at times when the rapport is not present, like when there is disagreement on some serious issue like raising the kids? Consider how difficult it would be for a couple to enjoy the most intimate of relationships when there are mental attitude sins in life. How can there be real unity when there is the presence of bitterness and lack of forgiveness? While *phileo* rapport love is a wonderful thing to grow into—where one can actually share the deepest and most important things in the soul with another soul that shares the same experiences and values—it is still a goal and should never be made the foundation. God’s unconditional *agapao* love must be the foundation. *Agapao*, that spiritual love that is free from any mental attitude sins is the only love that can give tremendous capacity to all of the other loves. In marriage one learns to love the spouse increasingly through the years. In some cultures where the

parents pick the spouse for their child, the new couple actually enjoys marriage more than in culture where people pick their own spouses in the attraction stage, and when the attraction wears off, so does the “love.” The reason that some cultures have happier marriages, though they are arranged, is because it is understood that one *learns to love* the spouse. By the way, I am not advocating for arranged marriages. However, it is a tempting idea if I am the one doing the arranging, ha! ha!

Peter, true to his nature, was cocky and ready to proclaim his highest love—remember, this is what got him in trouble before. However, the Lord was demonstrating to Peter the need for divine love which would necessitate divine grace—first things first! When the Lord finally conceded to using *phileo* love in His exchange with Peter, He was showing that, yes, this love was very necessary. *Phileo* love is always more enjoyable. However, we as children of God are to be characterized by divine *agapao* love. That divine love that loves no matter what, no matter the hardships or the costs. Divine love is not about us, it is about the object of our love.

On the Glory Road,

Pastor Don

