

Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives, Event #20g: Lessons for the young and old (John 21:18, 19)—part 1: those changes (physical, sexual, and interpersonal).

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.

In the twentieth event the Lord talks to Peter about his future martyrdom. In doing so, He touches on changes between Peter as a young man and as an old man:

John 21:18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."
¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

The immediate reference is, of course, to the martyrdom of the Apostle Peter. Our Lord contrasts the vigorous and somewhat self-willed youth and the mellowed old age of His servant and shadows forth his death, in bonds, by violence. The Lord then tells Peter, notwithstanding this martyrdom, the issue is faithfulness, "Follow Me."

In this text we have differences between the young and the old that I would like to touch on in the next few essays. Let's start with the young. Jesus tells Peter that when he was young he used to gird (dress) himself, and walk wherever he wished. One of the salient prerogatives of youth is the inherent free spiritedness they possess. As Shakespeare put it, "the world is one's oyster"; it is in the hands of the young to make or fashion their own lives. The future is filled with countless possibilities—for either a truly blessed life with God or a baneful existence characterized by a frantic search for happiness. Every person must live for some transcendence. He will either find it in God or attempt to find it in the fleeting things of this world.

Not only do the young have the challenges of moving into a blessed adult future with the Lord, they also have very many *present* changes and challenges to deal with in their young years. Consider three of the changes that adolescences experience: 1) *physical changes* (skin problems; anxiety over physical changes of the body; varying biological maturation which can bring embarrassment—in slow development they are treated more like children, in faster developments they can be teased), 2) *sexual changes* (confusion about erotic impulses followed by guilt; today's additional confusion about sexual orientation and identification which can add additional anxiety: e.g., fear of being gay because they really like someone (e.g., a best friend) who is of the same sex, or like being around people of the same sex; the onslaught of sexual "freedom" and easy access to erotically arousing video movies; and reluctance of parents to give clear sex education—Bible doctrine), 3) *interpersonal changes* as the adolescent moves away from parental control (when there is no clear and parental guidance or where the inner and outer worlds both seem to be unstable, adolescents often feel confused, anxious, and angry). Without Bible doctrine, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and an understanding of the grace of God, the young person does not have a chance of really flourishing in life.

What about the challenges of the elderly? (" . . . when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird (dress) you.") Likewise, they have many challenges. Let's note the same three as above: 1) *physical changes* (bodies run down; breakdowns in the immune system; gray hair or balding; loss of teeth; wrinkling skin; aches and pains in joints; incontinence; arthritis; gastrointestinal problems; heart related diseases; hearing impairment), 2) *sexual changes* (although sexual interest and desire for intimacy does not necessarily diminish with age, and pleasurable sexual experiences are possible for both sexes as expressions of love well into the later years, there can be physical issues that effect the activity), 3) *interpersonal changes* (children are no longer in the nest; retirement isolates one from the occupational world; the experience of seeing friends and relatives die, including one's spouse or parents; declining health limits one's ability to get away from home; adult children are often too busy, too far away, or too critical to provide contact—all of this can contribute to the older person's withdrawal from social contact, to the feeling that he or she is no longer useful or needed, and sometimes to a self-centered mentality that can contribute to premature death).

Life is filled with changes whether you are young or old or somewhere in between. Your earthly life will be filled with challenges until the day you die—this is guaranteed! The idea that once we get this or that then everything is going to be great is a fallacy characterized by the

reversionistic believer's frantic search for happiness. Let's keep it real. Contemporary Christianity is filled with platitudes and pop psychology that presents a superficial and oversimplified view of life that misleads and frustrates the Christian. When preachers present a huggy-bear, kissy-face view of life and a Christianity that is void of doctrine (a view that does not bear out the changes, the toils, the hardships of daily life and how to deal with them through fellowship and biblical wisdom), they do Christians no favors. The fact (correspondence truth) is that life is filled with changes and also that we have the means *right now* to deal with the changes and continue to live a thriving, robust, and joy-filled life—with eyes wide open at the present and the future. Jesus not only reveals to Peter his future state and martyrdom, but makes it clear that no matter what, the command is always: "Follow Me." This *requires* the ministry of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. Nothing else will do.

On the Glory Road,

Pastor Don



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