

Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives, Event #23: Appearance to Saul of Tarsus-1 (Acts 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-19).

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. Jesus appears to the Disciples minus Thomas, Lk. 24:36-49; Jn. 20:19-25.
- Event #19: 8 days after the resurrection. Jesus appears to Thomas & disciples, Mk. 16:14-18; Jn 20:26-31.
- Event #20: 2 weeks after the resurrection. Jesus appears to disciples on shore of Galilean Sea, Jn 21:1-25.
- Event #21: 3 weeks after the resurrection. Jesus appears to eleven disciples on mountain, Matt. 28:16-20.
- Event #22: 40 days after the resurrection. Jesus’s last group appearance & His ascension into Heaven, Mk 16:19-20; Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-12.
- Event #23: 3-6 years after the resurrection. Jesus appears to Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:3-9.

Although Jesus’s appearance to Saul of Tarsus is not part of the synchronization of Jesus’s resurrection appearances in the Gospels, Saul lists several appearances in 1 Corinthians that I would like to synchronize with the events we have studied:

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Paul lists six appearances:

1. He appeared to Cephas (Simon Peter): event #15.
2. Then to the twelve: event #19.
3. Seen by more than 500 brethren at once: between event #19 and #22.
4. Seen by James (the Lord's half-brother): after being seen by the 500 but before event #22.

Throughout the Gospels, James, the half-brother of Jesus is skeptical. In Mark 3:21 Jesus's mother and brothers come to take hold of Him to which Jesus responds that He regards His followers as being closer to Him than His own family. In Mark 6:2-4 Jesus notes that He has no honor in His own country or immediate family. In John 7:1-5 we are told that "not even Jesus's brothers [who taunt Him] were believing in Him."

However, after witnessing the resurrected Jesus Christ, James becomes not only a believer, he became the leading spokesman and authority in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:1-21; 21:17-26; Gal. 1:19; 2:1-10).

5. Then by all the apostles (event #22)
6. Lastly by the apostle Paul (Acts 9, 3-6 years after ascension in Acts 1, event #23).

Let's note Paul's conversion:

Acts 9:1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do." 7 And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. 8 And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, here am I, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

A few principles:

1. Saul's hatred. This chapter begins with Saul's persistent hatred, which led him to persecute those following Jesus. This occurred from three to six years after the beginning of the church in Acts 2. This fury was not some temporary flare of temper; it was his life-breath: "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord," 9:1. He was planning not only imprisonment, but death, for the "heretics." He was not content with carrying his hateful inquisition into the homes of Christians in Jerusalem, he will follow the fugitives to Damascus as well. His persecution was from his own heart. He was not a tool of the Sanhedrin but their mover. Saul as a young zealot would not rest till he had followed this "Christian poison" into every corner where it might have trickled.
2. Saul's sight of the resurrected Lord. The appearance of Jesus was no psychological event. It was regarded by Paul as being equal in evidential value to the flesh-and-blood vision of the risen Lord which the other Apostle witnessed to, and as placing him in the same line as a witness. Saul saw nothing less than the glorified manhood of Jesus, that Jesus whom he has thought of as a blasphemer, that Jesus whom he thought to have falsely been alleged to have risen from the dead.
3. Saul's change. He was in no mood to change his mind. He had not begun to lose his confidence that Jesus was a blasphemer, and himself a warrior for God. He went from breathing and threatening murder against the disciples of Jesus to being prone and asking 'Lord what will You have me to do?' This was no gradual conversion.

In the next DDR or two I would like to explore Paul's conversion a bit more. Paul, more than other, demonstrates the nature of personal love for God, which we are in the process of developing in our study of Job at FBC. Personal love for God trumps everything in life—there is no problem in life that is more powerful than personal love for God. There is a lot to learn about personal love for God as it relates to our first and second order desires and the impediment of our natural preference for evil over personal love for God. Let me just say that the dominant characteristic of a believer who has personal love for God/Christ is a dyadic love connection with Christ that motivates him to *consciously* live his life to please Jesus Christ. To live with the motivation to please Christ goes far beyond a servile attitude of faithfulness and obedience. The believer with personal love lives his whole life in the sunshine of God's love and consciously lives his life to please God—not man:

Ephesians 5:10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. 18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. 20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for

this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart. 22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. 4 And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

The most powerful thing in life is to really live and seek to please Christ in a sacred love relationship instead of always seeking the approval of man—it is a gross evil to care more about how you look to others than how you appear to God as far as your daily life. It is one thing to be faithful and obedient; it is quite another to do things for the Lord because you *desire* to do them for the Lord, not because you “have to” or for some boon. Only personal love provides that dynamic. Only personal love could so transform hateful Saul of Tarsus to Paul who was motivated and even controlled by personal love for God, 2 Cor. 5:14. We believers have two orders of desires. We have first-order desires which are our actual desires and second-order desires which are the desires we wish were realities in our first-order volitions. There are many believers who have second-order desires to have this personal love for God or to love to come to Bible class every time the door is open, but the reality is that their first-order desires have different desires and priorities. They want to have this fantastic love and excitement for the Lord (second-order desire), but instead they find themselves thinking about everything from temporal life issues to sin. As long as this is the case, they are precluded from having a deep personal love for Christ. They are too fragmented and their proclivity for sin is too strong for their second-order desires to become a reality in their first-order desire. Many are so dead to Christ in first-order desires that they do not even consciously even think if Christ would be pleased for them to study the Word or attend Bible class. Imagine that! There is a solution for moving the second-order will to first-order will and it is found in grace, namely sanctification. We will examine this in more detail in our next Bible class.

In His Sacred Love,

Pastor Don