

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 31, Number 2, May 2020

Enigmatic Sayings in The Gospel of John

"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54).

The Gospel of John contains certain sayings of our Lord Jesus in which the same vocabulary is used with two or more different levels of meaning. These sayings may be designated as enigmatic, mysterious. This situation is similar to our Lord's motivation for speaking in parables in the other three Gospels; so that some would understand his teaching and others (whose due time for understanding had not yet come) would not (Matthew 13:10-15). When a level of meaning is misunderstood, when one level is taken for another, the Master's statements may be wrongly applied, and false doctrine may result.

EATING THE FLESH OF THE SON OF MAN

Let us examine a statement of Jesus which has proven puzzling to believers in the resurrection. As found at John 6:53-54, our Lord's words are: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." The eating and drinking of the flesh and blood are certainly symbolic; this refers to appropriating the ransom benefits by faith. Those who do so, and remain faithful, expect to be literally raised "at the last day." But how can it be said that such a one "hath eternal life" (present tense)? The "eternal life" which one has as a present possession is not that immortal life which will be obtained at the "first resurrection," but the spirit-begotten existence which may be experienced now.

AIONIOS

The Greek word translated "eternal" is *aionios* (Strong 166), which is the adjectival form of *aion* meaning "age." While Strong gives "perpetual" as the meaning of *aionios*, we agree with Benjamin Wilson in his assessment that "Being an adjective and derived from the noun ... it cannot properly go beyond its meaning." (See the Alphabetical

Appendix, pages 871-2, of the Diaglott.) Rotherham attempts his own corrective by rendering the word as "age-abiding." This rendering, however, presents the unfortunate thought that the life here indicated only lasts for an age. Rather, the correct thought is that the spirit-begotten life now conferred is *characteristic* of the age-to-come — that is, that there is enough correspondence between the spirit-begotten life of the new creature and the life of the "first resurrection" that even now the new creature is considered as living the future life. That future life, once conferred, will not last only for the Millennial Age but, as Paul states, will be a putting on of "immortality" or deathlessness (1 Corinthians 15:53). Nor are we to understand from Jesus' words that such "eternal" or "*aionian* life" (Wilson's rendering) in the spirit-begotten state cannot be forfeited through unfaithfulness as long as one remains in the flesh.

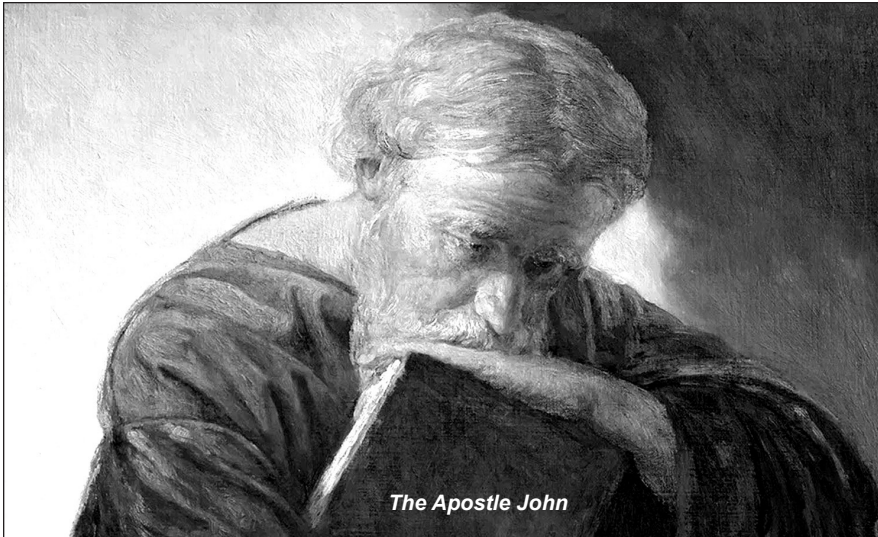
I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE

Of further consideration are Jesus' words to Martha when he was about to raise her brother Lazarus. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). The first part of the statement is clear. If one believes in Jesus (with an active faith, faithful unto death) and literally dies, he shall "yet" live — literally come to life in the "first resurrection." But can the second part of the statement be taken to mean that there are those who are currently living who, if they believe in Jesus, will never literally

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Enigmatic Sayings in John</i> | 1 |
| <i>Two Phases of Christ's Return</i> | 2 |
| <i>Our Lord's Resurrection Appearances</i> .. | 5 |

BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service for brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all requestors. Address: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), Bill Dutka, Adam Kopczyk, David Rice, Tom Ruggirello, and David Stein. Online at www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org.



The Pharisees had a *sort* of spiritual sight. They were not in the same situation as someone who was only minimally interested in religion, but was then enlightened by Jesus. They had their own understanding of the Torah, but they saw through the eyes of their tradition (compare Matthew 15:1-9). Now that Jesus made the real truth available, they persisted in that tradition. So Jesus was telling them that if they had been “blind” through no fault of their own, they would not have been held to a higher standard. But now, by continuing to “see” through the eyes of tradition, they were refusing the opportunity to actually see spiritually. A degree of willful sin is involved in

refusing to see truth, and persisting in tradition. The three levels of meaning, then, are (1) spiritual blindness, (2) traditional sightedness or understanding, and (3) true spiritual sightedness.

die? We must understand that **life** and **death** are used in two different senses, and only one of these is literal as normally understood. The literal life is mentioned first, and the spiritual or figurative life is mentioned second. So it is the one who now lives in the spirit-begotten condition and believes in Jesus who will “never die.” How will such a one never die?

Let us continue to look for different levels of meaning as we read the enigmatic sayings in the Gospel of John, as well as the rest of the Scriptures.

As long as faithfulness is maintained, the spirit-begotten life is never forfeited. Even though such one dies literally, and even prior to the *parousia*, he still “lives” in God’s memory — similar to Ancient Worthies who are remembered (Luke 20:37-38). But further, such a one will never die the “second death” (Revelation 20:6). This understanding is also the key to Jesus’ statement at John 8:51, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”

— Bro. Robert Virgil, selected from a longer article

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN BLIND

Finally, with regard to the concepts of **sight** and **blindness** we find that on the occasion of healing the man who was born blind, not just two, but three levels of meaning were used. Remember that the man then exercised faith in Jesus, whereas the Pharisees were highly critical. In response to this situation, Jesus remarked: “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39). This statement has no reference to literal blindness, even though a literal healing had occurred.

One might at first think that the contrast is simply between those who are spiritually sighted and those who are spiritually blind. But the account continues: “And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 11:40-41). So the Pharisees have complicated the picture by claiming to have spiritual sight, and Jesus seems to be taking them at their word. How may this be explained?

Two Phases of Christ’s Return

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).

When considering prophetic events post-1874, it is important to understand the time frame for the many scriptures referencing the Lord’s return, while using the most precise study techniques.¹ The following consideration suggests that scriptures describing the Lord’s return can be categorized into two major aspects, those being: the Lord coming **for** his saints, and his coming **with** his saints.

FOR HIS SAINTS

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 — This scripture describes Jesus’ return **for** his saints. Note the subject involves the raising of all his saints, albeit from two conditions. Also described are items he returns with: “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” (See Supplement at end.)

Highlighting the trumpet, note that the word used refers to an instrument (G4536), not its trumpet sound (G4537). Jesus is described holding, but not as blowing,

the trumpet. In the same sense, consider Revelation 8:6. “And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets [G4536] prepared themselves to sound [G4537].” Note that holding and sounding a trumpet are differentiated. This is an important concept because the sounding of the (we assume to be) seventh trumpet is used as a time stamp. Thus, the reference here to the Lord’s immediate return need not imply *sounding* of the trumpet.

Revelation 10:7 — Note carefully that the sounding of the seventh trumpet (assumed to be the trumpet of the seventh messenger) occurs *within* a period of the seventh messenger’s *voice*. This describes a period where the seventh messenger is actively engaged in speaking, yet not necessarily trumpeting. Since a speaking voice is more subtle than a trumpet blast, this could represent a period in which the seventh messenger continues to speak the Harvest Message to Laodicea *after his death, through his writings*, which are available to those that have an ear to hear. That process concludes when the “mystery” (the church) is finished (completed), followed by a trumpet blast, or message, to the world in a fashion that cannot be disregarded and will eventuate in its downfall. So, this scripture details a voice period **for** his church during the Parousia, while ending with a trumpet sounding (“begins to sound” implies a length of time) **with** his church at the Apocalupsis. This scripture describes the epoch we live in.

Revelation 10:1 — This seems a strong reference to the returning Lord (“mighty angel”) during the Parousia phase (“clothed with a cloud”). He brings with him the Harvest Message promising the lifting of the Adamic curse (rainbow), considerable understanding of the New Testament (the sun), and destruction of the earthly order of things (feet of fire). There is an experience with a “little book,” perhaps a physical description of the tiny books

produced by Br. Russell, the instrument used to prophesy far and wide, like the sound of a trumpet to the world. Revelation 10 describes the harvest period.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 — The primary focus here is upon the raising of the last saints, which represents the full number having come in. Thus, the completion of the church directly correlates to the sounding of the seventh trumpet, similar to Revelation 10:7.

Revelation 14:14-16 — The picture of “one like unto the Son of man” standing upon a cloud (the cloud separates the view of him from the earth) aptly symbolizes the returned Lord during his Parousia phase. The (first) sickle highlights the gathering in of the final number of saints remaining on earth during his Parousia phase.

WITH HIS SAINTS

Matthew 24:30-31 — An assemblage of the saints is again associated with a trumpet. In context with the previous verse, this illustrates an end time view, i.e. the Apocalypse when Jesus is revealed to the world exercising his regnal power.

Revelation 19 — This chapter gives great detail as to Day of Judgment events involving the church. The key events described here in order are:²

- Babylon’s destruction in Revelation 18:21 initiates the narrative.³
- The marriage of the Lamb (thus the completion of the church)
- A marshalling to battle of the Christ, head and body.
- The destruction of the corrupt elements of earthly power: the Kings of the Earth, the Beast, and the False Prophet.
- Subduing the Dragon at the Apocalypse of Christ.

| <i>Scriptural Elements of Christ’s Return</i> | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Return Scripture | Manner of Return | For or With Saints | Trumpet Sound | Voice | Reign | Destruction |
| 1 Thess. 4:15-17 | Parousia | For | With Trumpet | Of Archangel | | |
| Revelation 10:1 | Parousia | | | | | |
| Revelation 10:7 | Parousia | For | Harvest end | Period of time | | |
| 1 Corinth. 15:51-52 | Parousia | For | Harvest end | | | |
| Revelation 14:14-16 | Parousia | For | | | | |
| Matthew 24:30-31 | Parousia | For | From angel(s) | Of a trumpet | Power and glory | Troubled times |
| Revelation 19 | Apocalupsis | With | | | Diadem vs. 12 | Final, complete |
| Revelation 11:15-19 | Apocalupsis | With | Seventh angel | Great in heaven | Taken power | Wrath upon |
| Jude 14-15 | Apocalupsis | With | | | | Final |
| Revelation 20:1-3 | Apocalupsis | Jesus alone | | | | Satan’s power |

Revelation 11:15-19 — This scripture commences the reign of Christ with turmoil and wrath upon those opposed to God (suggesting a “rod of iron” type rule), and reward for those who reverence His name. Verse 19 implies a clear understanding of spiritual things, perhaps a function of the revealing, or Apocalypse. Through this time of trouble mankind will clearly identify the glorified church.

Jude 14-15 — A very clear description of the Lord coming **with** his saints to execute judgment upon the world.

SUMMATION

It is easy to confuse the timing of the many scriptures which refer to our Lord’s return. Thus events in context with them can be mistimed as well. Certain scriptures

are anchors around which a framework of interpretation should be constructed. The suggestion here is that scriptures describing the Lord’s return are just such anchors. It is a fascinating and many faceted study, and a blessing to pursue. May the year 2020 bring enhanced spiritual insight.

— *Br. Bob Davis*

(1) Using the most reliable translations, giving attention to the nuances of Greek words, noting scriptural context and accurate history where it applies. Suggestions for accurate translations: Wilson’s Diaglott, Marshall’s Interlinear Greek-English Testament, NASB, Rotherham for the O.T. (It is important to not “cherry pick” translations to fit a preferred interpretation).

(2) Events in this chapter concerning the Great Company are not discussed in this article.

(3) Babylon is the Catholic Church proper, not to be confused with the Beast of Revelation which is destroyed later in chapter 19.

Supplement

Let us consider the following.

Joshua 6

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (sequence reversed)

- | | |
|--|--|
| • On the seventh day ... they rose early (15) | • The dead in Christ shall rise first |
| • Priests blew the trumpets (16) | • With the trump of God |
| • Joshua said unto the people, Shout! (16) | • With the voice of the archangel |
| • So the people shouted (20) | • With a shout |
| • And the wall fell down flat (20) | |

With this sequence of events, those who had fallen asleep in death before Christ’s return are resurrected **first**. Then the seventh trumpet begins blowing. When the church is just complete and resurrected, Christ will spur the world to shout, and Armageddon will happen. (We will not try to guess now what kind of shout that will be.)

“In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, whenever he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God” (Revelation 10:7). That is, no one knew ahead of time when the seventh messenger would begin to sound (in the 1870s). It is not necessarily that the seventh messenger would be alive when the church reaches completion, but it is in his voice. That suggests Bro. Russell’s writings will be used in conjunction with the Bible right up until the church is complete. Will also suggest the Parousia begins with Christ’s return and continues throughout the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ.

— *Br. James Parkinson*

Some Options

The article above has some engaging points. One of them is its application of Matthew 24:30 to the close of the harvest, rather than to the opening of the harvest. This harmonizes with the following, from page 420 of the Sermon Book. Commenting on Matthew 24:30: “We cannot say that the sign of the Son of Man in heave will be his Parousia. On the contrary, the Parousia of Christ will not be known to the tribes, or families, of the earth in general, but will be known only to the most saintly ones of the Church of Christ. ... The sign of the Son of Man

must in some sense stand related to his ... shining forth in the ‘flaming fire’ of judgment, which the whole world of mankind will recognize” (Pastor Russell, Sermon, “The Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven”)

This is supported by studies of former editor Br. Carl Hagensick, expressed in a discourse titled “The Mourning Before and the Mourning After,” given many years ago at a San Diego Convention. Also by a discourse by Br. Russell Shallieu a few years later, citing the Sermon Book as above. See also the article “With Power and Great Glory” from the May 2019 *Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*.

We suggest, however, a break between Matthew 24:30, and verse 31. That verse 31 goes back to explain that during the previous years of the harvest Christ would have been gathering his elect Church class members that had been scattered to “the four winds” of Christendom (compare Zechariah 2:6,7).

We think that Jesus coming with saints and angels refers to holy ones of an angelic entourage, rather than to members of the Bride class. For example, Matthew 16:27 says “The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” The context is about rewarding the followers of Jesus. This comes after Jesus returns “with his angels” — with an angelic retinue. This may

apply also to Jude 14. See another example of an angelic retinue in Daniel 7:10.

Revelation 10 is under the sixth trumpet of Revelation. It thus seems to be pre-harvest, when the “little book,” the Bible, would have renewed widespread service. The rainbow may be an assurance that the persecution of the 1260 years, then recently completed, would not be repeated — as the bow in Noah’s day was a sign that previous troubles would not be repeated.

In Revelation 11:18, “prophets” and “saints” apparently are two descriptors for the Church class raised during the harvest. Compare Revelation 16:6 for the same words used for members of the Church class.

— Br. David Rice

Our Lord’s Resurrection Appearances

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life” (1 John 1:1 NIV).

The Bible records ten appearances following Jesus’ resurrection.^{1,2} This is significant, because in Biblical numerology ten is associated with completeness, perfection, and fullness in human affairs. Hence, there are ten fingers, ten toes, Ten Commandments, ten virgins, and ten horns on the fearsome beast. Ten is the sacred number of the tabernacle.³ While this lesson of completeness holds here, at the same time the scriptures speak of two additional appearances following Jesus’ ascension. Saul of Tarsus witnessed an eleventh appearance — an imperfect number — “as of one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). This left Paul with impaired vision. Mankind shall witness a yet future twelfth “appearance” of our Lord — a perfect number associated with the Lord’s special blessing of understanding when mankind shall discern him through the clouds of trouble in the last days (Revelation 1:7).⁴ At each of the ten appearances, only disciples were privileged witnesses. “Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all people, but unto *witnesses chosen* before of God, even to us” (Acts 10:40-41).

From these accounts of Jesus’ appearances we find ten different elements of significance. Ten appearances with ten elements suggest their square of $10 \times 10 = 100$, the number associated with the perfection of Jesus in the tabernacle.⁵ The ten elements are: (1) an apostle was present, (2) the main focus being on the apostle body, (3) the “Great Commission” to preach to the nations, (4) an appearance to a single witness, (5) materialization and dematerialization, (6) Jesus not recognized by familiar features, (7) Jesus permitted himself to be touched, (8) Jesus eats, or food is present, (9) the day of the week can be identified, and (10) the disciples directed to a specific location.

TEN IS THE SUM OF 7 + 3

These elements exhibit a structure of 7:3. Ten as the sum of 7 and 3 is a lesson we first find in the record of Job’s children. The natural attention of a patriarchal society is towards the seven sons as Job’s strength and legacy (Job 42:13-15). But the beauty (and, we trust, character) of his three daughters created special demands on his, and our, attention. Like their brothers, Job’s daughters received a full portion of the inheritance. Unlike their brothers, the only names in the record are Jemima, Kezia, and Kerenhapuch, these three daughters being the counter-balancing three-fold. If we regard the “seven-ness” as the major lesson, and the “three-ness” as the counterbalancing lesson with a special purpose and beauty, might there be lessons our Lord is intending for us to learn from a 7:3 structure in our Lord’s resurrection appearances?

(1) AN APOSTLE PRESENT

The apostles were specially privileged witnesses, being present at seven occasions where Jesus appeared. However, it is striking that the first witnesses to the resurrection were not the apostles, these witnesses to the resurrection were the faithful women who had pressed near to the cross and now, following the Sabbath, had come to better prepare our Lord’s body for burial (John 20:11-18, Matthew 28:9-10). We have first the meeting with Mary near the tomb, the second appearance was the meeting with the other women. “Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher” (Luke 24:22). The third and clearly extended appearance was our resurrected Lord’s discourse with Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32).⁶

Our Lord's Resurrection Appearances

All Appearances were to disciples,
"shown ... not to all people" (Acts 10:40-41)

| | Magdalene | Other Women | Emmaus | Cephas | 10 Apostles | With Thomas | Sea of Galilee | 500 Brethren | James | Ascension |
|--|-----------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| (1) Disciples, but No Apostle Present | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| (2) Main Focus on the Apostle body | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| (3) Great Commission to Preach to World | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | ● |
| (4) Single Witness | ● | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ |
| (5) Materialization / Dematerialization | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| (6) Not Recognized by Familiar Features | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| (7) Jesus was Touched | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| (8) Jesus Eating or Food Present | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| (9) Day of the Week Not Identified | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ○ |
| (10) Disciples Directed to a Specific Location | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | ● |

(Section references 173-183, 10 post-resurrection appearances, from: Robertson, A. T., "A Harmony of the Gospels," Harper & Rowe, 1950)

Hence, while the apostles are indeed the foundations of the New Jerusalem, three times the Lord showed that he also is pleased to use other believers as witnesses with no apostles present. As Jesus showed on these occasions, as privileged as the apostles are, and as deserving of honor, each of our lives may be touched with his fellowship in a personal and intimate way.

(2) MAIN FOCUS ON THE APOSTLE BODY

While the apostles, or an apostle, were present for 7 of the ten appearances, our Lord specially focused on *them alone* three times. The first meeting focusing on the Apostles is recorded in Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-25. At the first, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Famously, Thomas was not present, but subsequently, with Thomas present, special lessons of faith were taught (John 20:26-31, 1 Corinthians 15:5). One additional appearance to the apostles alone is recorded in John's Gospel, where he recounts the appearance at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:14) with seven of the ten present (John 21:2). "This is now the **third time** that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." By "disciples" it is clear that the sense is "apostles." With this special third meeting at Galilee in chapter 21, John's Gospel closes.

(3) MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH AND THE "GREAT COMMISSION"

On seven occasions the purpose of Jesus' appearing was to strengthen his disciples, focusing on their personal faith. This is the great work of the Gospel Age, developing Christ-likeness in the sons of God. By way of counter-balance, on three occasions the Lord gave a "Great Commission," empowering brethren to direct their energies outward, ministering and witnessing to the world. First,

the Great commission was given to the apostles with special focus on Peter to feed both the lambs and the sheep (John 21:15-17). Matthew records that the Great Commission was given to all the disciples during the appearance to the 500 (Matthew 28:18-20), and it is repeated to all the disciples again at the time of the ascension (Acts 1:8).

(4) APPEARANCE TO A SINGLE WITNESS

Christ is in communion with his Church. On seven occasions, the Lord was pleased to manifest himself amongst a company of his people. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). At the same time, on three occasions, single witnesses — Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), the apostle Simon Peter, or Cephas in Aramaic (Luke 24:33, 1 Corinthians 15:5), and the apostle James (1 Corinthians 15:7) — could combine their witness to testify that the Lord will indeed also manifest himself one-on-one to his disciples, both female and male (John 8:17).

Peter and James were unusually close to the Lord, and it might seem surprising that beloved John was omitted. It may be that he was not the recipient of a one-on-one appearance because it was important to show that sisters were also capable of receiving this special privilege. Had Mary Magdalene and all three of the closest apostles received a solo visit, the 7:3 structure of the ten appearances would have been lost. Arguably, this might not be vital — but it does work. In later years while on the island of Patmos, John did have a personal visit of Jesus in vision that was far more powerful and has been preserved for us in the book of Revelation.

(5) FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT KINGDOM

In seven appearances Jesus appeared in a manner that was not alarming to the senses. Yet, at the same time,

he has the power to materialize, or dematerialize, as he showed on three occasions: from the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31), in his first appearance to the apostles (Luke 24:36, John 20:19-25), and in his appearance to the apostles with Thomas present (John 20:26). Clearly, Jesus no longer was confined to a body of flesh.⁷

(6) THE FAMILIAR JESUS NOT REINCARNATED

Seven times, Jesus was recognized on sight, appearing with his familiar facial features and body of flesh. It was crucial that Jesus be recognized with his familiar features so there would be a certain witness to his resurrection. However, for three appearances, he showed that he is no longer constrained to that form, for “flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50). These three occasions where his appearance was unfamiliar were: the appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33), and the visit with the apostles at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:12).

Why is this? What if Jesus showed the power of the divine nature by appearing in a different form each time?

Among Greeks, reincarnation was one of the speculative ideas of metaphysics that formed part of the standard curriculum in the academies.⁸ Appearances in a different form on each occasion might have led believers to accept a murky, confused doctrine of reincarnation and transmigration of the soul (a misconception that still endures in part of the Jewish community). Furthermore, believers would expect manifestations of the reincarnated Jesus spirit in different forms leading to even more mischief by impostors. Hence, it was crucial that the familiar Jesus manifest himself, yet also show evidence of no longer being constrained to that body.

(7) “THE WORD OF LIFE ... OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED” (1 JOHN 1:1)

On seven occasions there is no testimony of Jesus being touched in the presence of multiple witnesses. The intimacy of fellowship between Jesus and the disciples would no longer be the same until that day when these witnesses would also undergo their resurrection change. Yet on three occasions, Jesus invited multiple witnesses to touch him, both female and male: in the appearance to the women (Matthew 28:9), to the ten apostles (Luke 24:39), and to the apostles with Thomas present (John 20:24-29).⁹

(8) THE PROMISE OF A RETURN — A RESURRECTED CHRIST WHO EATS

A divine being has no need of drink or food. There is joy in sharing food and drink that makes supping a satisfying picture of communion with Jesus, individually and as a company of saints. Supping is an important element of the Lamb’s wedding, where a blessing is promised even to those who are not part of the bride class (Revelation 19:9).

Three occasions give direct testimony, by multiple witnesses, to Jesus eating. (1) The disciples on the road to Emmaus. “They constrained him, saying, ‘Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them’ ” (Luke 24:29,30). The Jewish custom to this day enjoins one who offers the blessing and breaks the bread to partake of a small piece before passing it around. (2) Later the same day, Jesus requested food of the apostles. “Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish. And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:41-43). (3) At the sea of Galilee, “Jesus saith unto them, ‘Come and dine.’ And none of the disciples durst ask him, ‘Who art thou?’ knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise” (John 21:12,13). Again, the Jewish custom makes it likely that Jesus ate also.

In all ten appearances, there is no mention of Jesus drinking wine, thus fulfilling the promise that Jesus would not drink wine thenceforth with his beloved saints until their deliverance (Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18). The disciples needed to be able to testify that Jesus was not merely a visibly manifested spirit. Before leaving this topic, three other observations are in order:

When the Lord dines on spiritual food with us (Revelation 3:20), these appearances suggest that the symbolic equivalent of bread and grilled fish should be on the menu (Luke 24:30, Luke 24:42, John 21:9). Our Lord’s supping with the disciples suggest his wishes for intimacy of communion, where he, his mind, his words, are in us — and we are in him through faith in his blood (John 6:55, 15:4-7). For gentile converts nurtured on classical mythology, this supping provided additional testimony that Jesus would return. Among gentiles was a belief going back to the Age of the Patriarchs that the moral code of hospitality obligated a return to your host if food was shared.

(9) SUNDAY — THE RESURRECTED LORD’S DAY

Observance of the Sabbath day is the fourth commandment, and so as not to let one jot or tittle of the law fail, the church is enjoined to observe the greater antitype of this Sabbath each and every day of their lives.¹⁰ However, the final lesson to draw from the Lord’s appearances is that it establishes Sunday, by our common Roman reckoning of midnight to midnight, as the Resurrected Lord’s day.

Five, or fully half of these appearances, took place within the first eighteen hours of discovering the empty tomb on the Resurrection Sunday. For the seven times we can establish the day of the week on which an appearance occurred, six of those times are on Sunday. The ascension took place on a Thursday, completing another scripturally significant period of “forty” as well as serving as a counterbalance to the disgrace of our Lord’s betrayal and arrest on a Thursday.¹¹

In the three appearances for which we are unable to establish the weekday, some or all may have been Sundays by our common reckoning.¹² Irrespective of this, the combined result of these six Sunday appearances, closely followed by Pentecost Sunday, fixed Sunday in the consciousness of the church as the day for worship. Henceforth, the church looked beyond the week ending rest, Saturday by Jewish reckoning, to the opening of a new week, the eighth day, Sunday, as the Resurrected Lord's day. Sunday became the day of gathering for worship.

The three occasions where there is no reference to a specific day are (1) at the Sea of Galilee in John 21. Any day but Saturday could be a working day. (2) The appearance to 500 brethren (Matthew 28:16-20, 1 Corinthians 15:6). The location was remote enough to have exceeded a Sabbath-day's journey, a common proscription they would have been unlikely to violate. (3) The appearance to James (1 Corinthians 15:7).

(10) THE DISCIPLES DIRECTED TO A SPECIFIC LOCATION

Three times the disciples were directed to a specific location, and the appearance of Jesus was expected. (1) To the women who Jesus met, he said "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matthew 28:10). In the first such meeting, seven of the eleven apostles were fishing at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:2). (2) Details of which mountain in Galilee, and when the meeting should take place, were given sufficiently in advance so that 500 brethren could attend (Matthew 28:16-20, 1 Corinthians 15:6). (3) Then the disciples were directed to return to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem they would witness the ascension of Jesus from the Mount of Olives, and remain until Pentecost. "And, being assembled together with them, [he] commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4).

The lengthy trip of 120 or more miles from Jerusalem to Galilee after the week of unleavened bread was followed by directions to go to a mountain further north in Galilee. The core of the company of disciples then were instructed to journey back to Jerusalem. This is a lot of walking with travel provisions! Jesus knew there was value in this departure from everyday business. A new commission was now given to the church. No doubt this walking provided extended communing and consideration of the remarkable, world changing events they had seen.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

For the ten resurrection appearances of Jesus, the primary lessons are the importance of apostleship, nurturing the church, ecclesia communion, and witness to the resurrection of the Jesus.

These are counterbalanced by lessons of care for the individual members of the body, commissions to preach to the world, and our Lord's new nature in a resurrected

body capable of dematerializing and taking other forms, while still capable of taste and touch. In these as in all his workings, the Lord's hand shows purpose, structure, and balance.

— Br. Richard Doctor

(1) An earlier version of this article covered 7 of these 10 elements in the resurrection appearances. That was published in *The Herald* (March 2016) and *Beauties of the Truth* (August 1996). As the Herald article was going to press I was surprised to read about the appearance on the Sea of Galilee, "This is now the **third** time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead" (John 21:14). It seemed clear that additional elements might be found in the record. The three elements added are (1) Main focus on the Apostle body, (2) The "Great Commission" to preach to the nations, (3) Disciples directed to a specific location.

(2) Robertson, A.T., *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Harper & Rowe, New York, 1950. Robertson gives the ten appearances. However, it is noticed that R2809 separates Matthew 28:16-20 and 1 Corinthians 15:6 into an 8th and 9th appearance which would give 11 appearances if this line of reasoning is followed.

(3) Frey, A., *The Tabernacle of God*, Chicago Bible Students Book Republishing (1966), page 266.

(4) Russell, C.T., *The Time is at Hand*, Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 2 (1916) page 138.

(5) Frey, A., *op. cit.*, page 96.

(6) In Luke 24:33-35, when Cleopas and the second disciple returned from Emmaus, they found "the eleven" and other disciples (actually ten apostles since Thomas was missing, John 20:24) already engaged (verse 34) in an excited ongoing discussion (G3004, *legontas*) about the appearance of Jesus to Simon Peter. Then both the disciples hastily expounded on (G1834, *exeegouoiunto*, "related," in the aorist to indicate the haste) what had happened on the road (verse 35).

(7) The final departure of Jesus, where "a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9), seemingly was not a dematerialization. Being enshrouded with the clouds surrounding Jesus seems distinctly unlike a dematerialization where he vanished before their eyes.

(8) Plato, *The Republic*, Chapter 11. "The Immortality of the Soul and the Rewards of Goodness," Section 3, "The Myth of Er."

(9) Considering Jesus' command to Mary, "Touch me not" (John 20:17), we could ask: Was Jesus not simply saying that the blessings she and others desired just could not be given before he appeared in the presence of God for us? This is possible, but Jesus also wished Mary to hasten and spread the news of his resurrection to the other disciples. At the same time, the explanation Jesus gave was neither the need for haste, nor that touching him was improper, but rather a third explanation — he was not yet ascended to the father. Could it be that if Mary had touched Jesus, this would have confounded the 7:3 structure of these appearances — and as we can see, with the touching only in the presence of multiple witnesses?

(10) Russell, C.T., "I Will Have Mercy, Not Sacrifice" (original in *Zion's Watchtower*, April 15, 1910), R4599.

(11) Starting from the Sunday of the resurrection, 5 weeks (Sunday to Saturday) of 7 days equals 35 days, plus 5 days (Sunday to Thursday) equals 40. This brings us to Thursday for the ascension.

(12) "After eight days again" (John 20:26) may mean that this appearance followed sunset on Sunday, hence, the eighth day, a Monday, by Jewish reckoning. The text is not specific enough and this could refer to another time on Monday. Possibly it merely means the 8th day inclusively. Luke 9:28 perhaps means that also, thus harmonizing with Mark 9:2 as intervening days. It is also possible that Sunday was reckoned as Day 1, e.g., the first offering of first fruits was on a Sunday, Day 1, so that the second offering of wheat/spelt first fruits was on Sunday, Day 50.