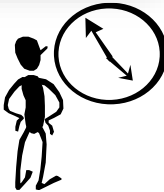


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

The Risen Savior

By Steve A. Hamilton

After Jesus was laid in the grave following His crucifixion, He appeared at least seven times on earth before His final ascension into heaven. The assumption that Jesus ascended but one time into heaven after His death is only a theory. He ascended at least twice after His death and may have traversed heaven and earth between all seven recorded appearances prior to his final ascension into heaven.

The proof is not readily evident by a casual reading of the seven accounts where Jesus appears before his disciples. A concerted effort comparing the occurrences with the chronology of time is required. J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton's literary work, The Fourfold Gospel, combined the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) into one harmonious reading by paying attention to the chronology of events. We benefit from their study by seeing the seven recorded occurrences when Jesus appeared on earth after His death and before His final ascension into heaven.

The Lord's first appearance occurred three days after His death. Mary Magdalene was at Jesus' tomb inquiring about the Lord's body (Jn. 20:11-17). After Jesus makes his presence known to Mary, "*Jesus saith unto her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*" Jesus is telling Mary that He has not yet ascended, but He is going to ascend as though He will do so while Mary is away telling the disciples. Later that evening, Jesus invites the disciples to touch Him (Lk. 24:39). It seems obvious that Jesus ascended into heaven by then since He was no longer concerned if anyone touched Him.

This would not be the first time Jesus ascended to

heaven. He told the thief on the cross, *“Today you will be with Me in Paradise”* (Lk. 23:43). Upon Jesus’ death, His soul ascended to Paradise for those three days (Matt. 12:40). We know through prophecy concerning the Messiah that He would not remain in Paradise (Psm. 16:10). Peter quotes the prophecy *“that His soul was not left in Hades”* (Acts 2:31). Rather, Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

The ascension that Jesus tells Mary about would not have likely occurred 40 days later. Luke reported *“He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days...”* (Acts 1:3). Luke doesn’t mention where Jesus was at or what He was doing; only that Jesus was seen by the Apostles throughout 40 days. Did Jesus leave the earth after His resurrection but before His public ascension?

The theory that Jesus roamed the earth for those 40 days is difficult to prove. On the third of the seven recorded occasions, Jesus appears *“in another form”* (Mk. 16:12). Assumably, He was in the form of another man. This shows He was not restricted to the laws of nature but conducted Himself in a supernatural way. Luke’s account of the same occurrence says He later *“vanished”* (Lk. 24:31). Humans do not vanish into thin air. Our risen Savior was operating in the manner of a divine being. Jesus was no longer subject to natural laws. This fact alone suggests He was free to operate with all the authority that was given to Him (Matt. 28:18).

Additional evidence of the Lord’s activities before the day of Pentecost is provided in the Book of Revelation. While John was talking about the 144,000 he says, *“These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb”* (Rev. 14:4). The first group of souls to be redeemed were the 144,000. That means their redemption occurred before the 3000 were baptized on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41).

Christians are redeemed and sealed upon baptism (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The 144,000 were not redeemed or sealed while they lived on earth. Yet, they were redeemed and sealed before earth time would end (Rev. 7:3). The Hebrew writer informed us that the Old Testament faithful would be redeemed by the means of Christ’s death. *“And for this reason, He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”* (Heb 9:15). The most logical conclusion would hold the 144,000 as faithful servants of the Old Testament rather than Christians under the New Testament.

The 144,000 were redeemed after Christ’s death but before the day of Pentecost! That means Jesus was in heaven during that time as He was the one directing the sealing and the redemption of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:3, 14:1). Previous to this occasion, the Lamb opened the seven seals in heaven, and He stayed the four angels at the four corners of

the earth according to the Book of Revelation (Rev. 5:1-7:8). All the while, the Lord makes multiple appearances before His disciples on earth. It is highly unlikely Jesus roamed the earth during those 40 days or that His final public ascension was the first time He ascended to heaven after His death.

Small Churches

By David Maxson

“Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” (1 Kings 19:13-14)

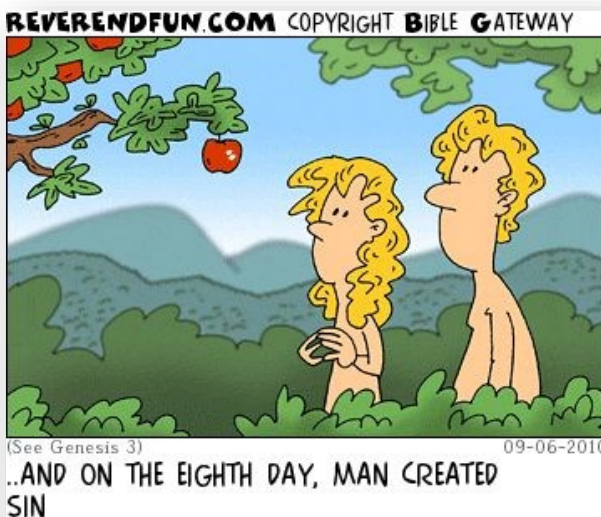
On our honeymoon, Adrienne and I worshiped with a very small group. They met in a modest sized building, so we expected a fair number to show up. Little did we know that our presence in the Bible class would nearly double the attendance!

There are probably thousands of similar situations around the world each Lord’s Day where just a few souls gather together to worship. They meet in huts, under trees, in store fronts, in houses, and in some cases, in church buildings that years ago held many more members.

These groups, no matter how small, are precious to the Lord. When we go on vacation, we should keep little groups like these in mind, and search them out to worship with them (and with the internet, they are easier to find than they used to be). It takes a little more work on our part, but what a great blessing we can give! We remind them that they are a part of a larger family, that they’re not alone. They’ve made a conscious choice to stand for truth. Our presence tells them that they are not standing by themselves.

And while I’m on the subject, if you’re part of a church that offers the live streaming option, please, please, PLEASE -- don’t use this as a convenience when you have the ability to encourage one of these small churches while on vacation.

God bless all of those who faithfully hold fast to your truth and refuse to sell out. May we have more opportunities to support them in their stand for truth!



On Living Memories – “I’ll Live On”

By Ed Harrell

Most of us have sung the old song affirming the central Christian hope that we shall live on into eternity. It is a grand aspiration that springs from our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The belief that “I’ll live on” empowers me to overcome life’s adversities.

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain.... For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:12–19, NKJV).

Let me suggest another way in which all of us live on. Recently, I have pondered the power of memory and recollection in my life. I suspect others of you have had similar thoughts.

As I have grown older, my mind has become more reflective and introspective; in some ways, for all of my forgetfulness, I am much more aware of my past. I have flashbacks that bring to mind events long forgotten. I actually feel myself blushing when I recall those embarrassing moments when I did something incredibly dumb; at other times, I savor one of those rare occasions when I stumbled into saying the right thing.

But my most persistent memories have to do with my mother and dad. I have been quite surprised by how frequently my mind reflects about my parents. In my car, in my office, or even in the midst of a conversation, I will think of my Dad and something we did together.

I had a few quarrels with my father when he was alive, but I am happy to tell you that my memories now are universally wholesome and helpful. I treasure all of the things that my Dad did for me that went unnoticed at the time. He directed me and formed me. And he helped. Most of us probably feel some regrets that we did not notice more and say more.

But I feel less and less guilt about these oversights. Because my Dad lives on. Long after his death, he still guides me and helps me. His presence is real and powerful. I needed his help when he was here, though I never knew how much. Since his death, and as I have grown more reflective, he has continued to help and mold me.

Such thinking gives me great confidence that I shall live on. I am pretty sure that thirty or forty years from now the minds of my children will be flashing back with regularity, remembering our good times and the best of my efforts to help them. I know how persistent and powerful those thoughts will be. It makes my leaving the world seem less final. Their memories of Daddy will strengthen their hopes that we shall meet again—that those “who have fallen asleep in Christ” are not perished.