

Sunday 5th May 2019

Third Sunday of Easter

White



Collect

Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Acts 9:1-22 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Conversion of Saul

9¹ But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.⁴ And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”⁷ The men who were travelling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”¹¹ And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of 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.”¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”¹⁷ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened.

Saul Proclaims Jesus in Synagogues

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

COMMENT: Much is made by sceptical scholars over the fact that Paul’s meeting with the Risen Lord was allegedly via a vision. This is then factored backward, as the experience of all the Apostles. The detail of the theophany (“appearance of God”) needs closer attention. On the Damascus Road Paul hears a voice (Acts 9:4) - he does not dream he heard a voice. He did not have a vision of hearing a voice. Of course the Lord was accompanied by a radiant light – and this fact may induce the sceptics to incorrectly to cast this as a vision. Also it must be noted that those who were with him experienced hearing the voice although they did not understand what was being said – Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9, as the voice spoke in the Hebrew language – Acts 26:14. The voice made it clear that the speaker was non-other than Jesus, Acts 9:5 and Acts 26:15. Furthermore in Acts when anyone has a vision, with one exception Luke identifies and states that this is the case. For example Paul’s vision of Ananias, and Ananias hearing the Lord in a vision Acts 9:10-12. Cornelius’ vision Acts 10:1, and Peter’s vision when the text clearly states “he was in a trance” Acts 10:9-19. Also there is Paul’s vision at night of a man of Macedonia who requests assistance, Acts 16:9. All are identified, and stated in the text, that they are visions. These examples were of people who alone saw the vision – no one else. The exception which is a vision and not clearly labelled as such, is an event at the stoning of Stephen. “But he (Stephen), full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’.” Acts 7:55-56. Yet, again, we can note, it is a single person which sees the vision. The members of the Jewish Council did not see the vision. It is Stephen who relates what he sees. This was not true of Saul’s conversion experience, where other people who were with him were affected by the experience. Also the author of the Acts provides further details with Barnabas relating that Saul “had seen the Lord” Acts 9:27. Even if we were to accept that Paul’s experience on the Damascus Road was a veridical (true and God given) vision (against the clear evidence it was indeed something he clearly heard and saw), this cannot be read back into the experience of the Apostles. After forty days of appearing to the believers, Luke notes that Jesus ascends into heaven Acts 1:1-11. In Mark and Matthew Jesus simply disappears from the story line. John notes a forthcoming Ascension (John 20:17) but no event is described. What ever form Jesus’ departure took, it is clear that Saul/Paul’s conversion was after this event. It is the risen and ascended Lord who meets Saul on his journey – but non-the-less, he had seen the risen Lord. In his Corinthian epistle Paul’s use of the term spiritual body in expanding on the resurrection, places us in the nature of our Lord’s ascended body, see 1 Corinthians 15:35ff. Also “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.” Philippians 3:20-21. If anyone wishes to count Paul’s experience as a vision, they do so clearly against the evidence of the text, and more honesty is needed by critical scholars about their rejection of the claims of the author of Acts about the event, rather than suggesting they are interpreting the text.

John 21:1-14 [15-19] English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

21 ¹ After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus

stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards^[a] off. ⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[Jesus and Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”]

Footnotes: a. Greek *two hundred cubits*; a *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimetres.

COMMENT: Scholarly consensus regards this chapter as an appendix to the Gospel. Jesus appeared in Galilee to several disciples who had returned to fishing. He showed that he had been raised from the dead by eating with the disciples. He also restored Peter’s leadership in the apostolic church in the light of Peter’s earlier denial.

Psalm 30 *Exaltabo te, Domine* Grail Psalter

✠ I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me.

¹ *A Psalm. A Canticle for the Dedication of the Temple. Of David*

² I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me
and have not let my enemies rejoice over me. ✠

³ O Lord, I cried to you for help
and you, my God, have healed me.

⁴ O Lord, you have raised my soul from the dead,
restored me to life from those who sink into the grave. ✠

⁵ Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love him,
give thanks to his holy name.

⁶ His anger lasts a moment; his favour all through life.
At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn.

✠ I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me.

⁷ I said to myself in my good fortune:
“Nothing will ever disturb me.”

⁸ Your favour had set me on a mountain fastness,
then you hid your face and I was put to confusion. **✠**

⁹ To you, Lord, I cried,
to my God I made appeal:

¹⁰ “What profit would my death be, my going to the grave?
Can dust give you praise or proclaim your truth? **✠**

¹¹ The Lord listened and had pity.
The Lord came to my help.

¹² For me you have changed my mourning into dancing,
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

¹³ So my soul sings psalms to you unceasingly.
O Lord my God, I will thank you for ever. **✠**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This psalm of thanksgiving for recovery from a near-fatal illness came into liturgical use celebrating the re-dedication of the temple after the Maccabean Revolt of 165 BC. Its references to deliverance from death make it appropriate for use during the Easter season.

Short Preface

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead. For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

Post Communion

Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**