

The Resurrection Tour

Overview

After his resurrection, our Lord appears to his disciples in different places: Galilee in Matthew, Jerusalem in Mark, Luke, and Acts, both in John. Careful study shows that the visit to Galilee comes between two sets of appearances in Jerusalem.

Why these different venues?

- Partly, no doubt, to demonstrate his promise of Matt 28:20, “I am with you”; in the places where they had followed him during the three years, there he appears to assure them of his continued presence “always, even unto the end of the age.”
- In addition, the setting often contributes to the message.

Our main purpose here is to reflect on the main theme of what he taught them in each place and understand how the venue emphasizes and reinforces the message.

Initial Appearances in Jerusalem: “Fear Not”

At the Tomb, Matt 28:1-10

Note in Matthew’s account the prevalence of “fear” (vv. 4, 5, 8, 10)

Fear at seeing an angel is a common theme throughout the OT:

Jdg 6:22 And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

Jdg 13:21-22 Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD. 22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

It is fundamentally the fear of fallen Adam, hiding himself in the garden after his sin (the very first reference to “fear” in the Bible) :

Gen 3:9-10 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?
10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

The angel’s response to this fear is the fact of the resurrection.

Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

The resurrection shows that our sin is gone, and because of this, we need not fear before God or his representatives.

On the Road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-32

Note his initial salutation to them, v.17: “What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?”

The Resurrection Tour

Their fear is expressed in 20-21. Peter had spoken for them all when he confessed Jesus as “the Christ,” the Messiah. They had fervently embraced this fundamental hope of Israel, founded on OT promises. What are they now to conclude about God’s faithfulness?

The Lord’s response (25-27) is to show that his death, rather than invalidating God’s promises, is part of the plan foretold by the prophets.

In the Upper Room, John 20:19-20, 26-27

Twice; on Easter Sunday (John 20:19-20), and again a week later (John 20:26-27).

Note their fear, John 20:19, “for fear of the Jews,” shown by the locked door (both times). He reassures them twice (19, 21), “Peace be unto you.”

His response to this fear is to emphasize his physical nature, showing his hands and side. Since the power of God is able to bring him back from the dead, the most powerful enemy of all, they should have no fear of any earthly foe.

Importance

Thus the first lesson of the Resurrection is that we need not fear. We are prone to being a fearful people: fearful of our own sin, fearful that God’s promises will fail, fearful of the opposition of men. Jerusalem must have been a particularly fearful place for them to be at this point. They are held there by the Law, which commands a seven-day feast after Passover (Lev 23:5-8; Deut 16:16), including holy convocations in the temple, where they will be exposed to the Jewish priests. We should learn two things from these episodes:

1. We are not the first to fear. It is endemic to our race.
2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ should calm our fears and give us strength and courage to live before the Lord in the land of the living.

Appearances in Galilee: “Serve”

Background

Before the passion, the Lord told them that he would meet them again in Galilee (Matt 26:32), and Matthew emphasizes this in his account of the resurrection (28:7,10). Two appearances to them are recorded in Galilee.

By the Sea, John 21:2-6, 15-17

John describes this as the third appearance of the Lord to the eleven (v.14), after the two in Jerusalem, so this appearance must come before that recorded in Matthew.

They have returned to Galilee, but there is no sign of the Lord, and so they turn their hand to their old craft. There the Lord appears to them after a fruitless night of toil.

The episode recalls the incident when he had first called them to be “fishers of men” (Luke 5:1-11).

Luk 5:8-10 When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him,

at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10 And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

He is reminding them that this call is still incumbent on them. In particular, he calls Peter to feed his sheep (vv. 15-17).

On the Mountain, Matt 28:16-20

Again, there is an echo of his earlier ministry, the sermon on the mount.

Mat 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, **his disciples** came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them,

Matthew places this right after the calling of the disciples by the sea of Galilee (Matt 4). That sermon appears to have been intended to prepare them for their ministry, and so once more he gathers them into a mountain that he might send them out.

Importance

Galilee was the origin of the Lord's ministry, the place where he did most of his mighty works, and where his popularity grew. It was there he ministered with the disciples to teach, heal, and feed; and there that he sent them out two by two into the villages. The importance of commissioning them now in this place is to emphasize that his work is to continue, through them. They are not to go back to what they were before. Now they are called to serve him.

This commission from the risen Lord has never been withdrawn. If he had stayed in the grave, one might think his message was over. But he is risen, and we must now carry on.

Final Appearances in Jerusalem: "Live in the Spirit," Luke 24:49-53

The final appearances find the Lord with the Eleven back in Jerusalem. Luke's record merges the earlier and later Jerusalem appearances into a single narrative, but it is clear that the Lord ascends to heaven from a spot near Bethany (24:50), after urging them to wait for the promise of the Father. Acts begins with the same exhortation, to wait for the Spirit (1:4-5, 8) before beginning the service to which they are committed in Matt 28.

Act 1:4-8 And, being assembled together with *them*, [he] commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ... 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The point of this appearance is thus that the ministry committed to us is not to be in the strength of the flesh, but in the power of the Spirit.

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Summary

The Lord has promised, “Lo, I am with you.” His presence is inescapable, and he demonstrated that after his resurrection by showing up repeatedly, not only in and around Jerusalem, but in Galilee, to encourage his disciples. As these appearances took place, he gave them three lessons that are precious to us.

In his first appearances in and around Jerusalem, he taught them, “Fear not.” His resurrection means that our sin is gone. God’s holy presence is no longer something for us to dread. We can come boldly before the throne of grace. And assured of his favor, we certainly need not fear men.

In his appearances in Galilee, he reminded them of his original call to them: “Serve.” By the sea, he urges Peter to care for the believers, reflecting the internal service that we owe to the body of Christ. On the mountain, he directs their attention outward to “all nations.”

When he meets them again in Judaea, he instructs them in the resource that will enable them to carry out this mission, the Holy Spirit. The service that he requires of us is not to be carried out in the strength of the flesh, but by the power of the Spirit, the same power that raised our Savior from the dead.