

The Resurrection and Holy Tradition

The resurrection of Christ was first proclaimed and later narrated. The epistle witness to the resurrection before the Gospel narratives were written.

There are two Gk. verbs (with related nouns) used in the NT: *egeirein* and *anistanai*. They both have a range of meanings: to awaken the dead from sleep; to make the dead stand upright; to draw the deceased out of or up from the abode of the dead. (Brown, p. 78)

The early NT texts clearly reveal that the Father raised Jesus from the dead. These are one-member formulas: I Thess. 1:10; I Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; Acts 17:31).

In two-member formulas there is a contrast drawn between (by crucifixion) and resurrection: (I Thess. 4:14); Rom. 14:9; Acts 2:23-24; 4:10; 5:3-0-31; 10:39-40).

I Cor. 15:3-8

The tradition that the Apostle Paul “transmitted” was the one that he “received.” These are technical terms of handing down a tradition in Judaism.

The four *oti* (that) clauses are balanced: the first and third are qualified by the expression “according to the Scriptures;” the second and fourth are shorter.

There is a balance of two sets of three appearances. The first set of three includes:

- 1) Cephas
- 2) Then to the twelve
- 3) 500 brethren, some of whom are still alive though some have fallen asleep.

Then:

- 4) to James
- 5) then to all the apostles
- 6) least of all to me, as to one untimely born (lit. “aborted); a “monster.”

A key term in describing these appearances of the risen Lord is the Gk. *ophthe*. See Kesich: “This crucial expression *ophthe* which appears in the creedal statement of I Corinthians 15 as well as in other passages of the New Testament (Lk. 24:34; Acts 9:17; 13:31; 26:16), points to the external, objective character of the Easter event as well as to the presence of the risen Christ before Paul outside Damascus.” pp. 117. This is the passive form of the verb *oraō* (I see). It is used with the dative of the person to whom the appearance is being made, as in: he “has appeared to Simon.” (Lk. 24:34). It can just as easily be translated as: “he showed himself.” The initiative is always God’s.

“The word *ophthe* expresses both faith in the resurrection of Christ as well as rejection by the Church of every attempt to reduce the appearances of Christ to subjective human experiences. They are rather events in history that transcend human perceptions.” (Kesich, p. 118)

“The Jesus who died and was buried is the same Jesus who was raised and appeared. This continuity ... is an important element in the idea of bodily resurrection.” (Brown, p. 84)

Does the first set of three feature followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry; and the second set include post-resurrection new followers? Or perhaps the first set are “Church-founders” and the second set “early missionaries?”

I Cor. 15 is the first time the actual appearances of Jesus are recorded. The Apostle Paul, later in I Cor. 15 points to a clear element of transformation, as well as continuity, between an earthly and a resurrected body, as in vv. 42-44:

What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

It is sown a physical body [*psychikos*] it is raised a spiritual body [*pneumatikos*].