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The Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

Part 3

By Jim Myers

The final witness Paul presents in his list of witnesses to the resurrection of Christ is himself.

8 and last of all, as it were to one **untimely born**, He appeared **to me** also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but **I worked harder than all of them**, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11 So whether it be I or they, this is the way we preach and this is the way you came to faith.

Paul uses an unusual Greek word to introduce himself in this passage – **EKTROMA**. The usual translation of this word is “miscarriage.” The Anchor Bible provides insight into this unusual introduction.

If Paul meant the designation literally, it would seem to mean that he had been born prematurely; and then Christ appeared to him. . . . Probably the “miscarriage” or untimeliness idea is defined in the strictures he makes against himself. His role as persecutor is most naturally taken to refer to absolute opposition to the Christian church from the outside, a misfortune that resulted from the “untimeliness” of Paul’s conversion. (p. 322)

Questions concerning Paul’s claim that Jesus appeared to him have been of significant importance to theologians for centuries. The first question is – “How did Jesus appear?” The second is – “When did he appear?” The New Testament answers to these questions are found in the Book of Acts (written approximately 30 to 40 years after Corinthians).

Account #1 - 9:3 And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground, and 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 it shall be told you what you must do. " 7 And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. 8 And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

Account #2 - 22:6 "And it came about that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 8 "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He

said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' 9 "And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not hear the voice of the One who was speaking to me. 10 "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go on into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' 11 "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

Account #3 - 22:17 "And it came about when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that **I fell into a trance,** 18 and **I saw Him** saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' 19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.' 21 "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

The first two accounts report that Paul was on a journey when Paul saw a bright light. The second account states that the time was about noon. Both accounts agree that Paul heard a voice which identified itself as Jesus. **Account #1** says that the men who were traveling with him also heard the voice but nothing is said about seeing a light. **Account #2** claims they didn't hear the voice, but they saw the light. Both accounts report that Paul couldn't see after his experience, but the eyes of his fellow travelers were not affected.

Account #3 describes a different event. This time Paul was in the Jerusalem Temple praying when he fell into **a trance.** While he was **in the trance** he saw "Him." **Did Jesus actually appear to Paul in a body or did he appear in visions or trances in all of Paul's experiences?**

Early Christianity recorded other accounts of people who claimed that Jesus appeared to them in visions and trances. Some of their writings were just as important to early groups of followers as Paul's writings became to the Roman Church. However, the other writings were not included in the Roman Church's "New Testament," i.e., the Shepherd of Hermas,

In discussions concerning the validity of the above writings, the issue was raised whether testimonies of visions of Jesus or only accounts from those who claim to witness a bodily resurrected Jesus would be accepted. Paul's writings were obviously accepted, but the debates concerning which category Paul's testimony should be placed continue to this day.

One final issue arose concerning Paul's list of witnesses in 1 Corinthians 15 -- **the glaring omission of the role of the women** in the accounts, i.e., Mark 16:

1 And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. . . 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. 6 And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'" 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. 9 Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, **He first appeared to Mary Magdalene**, from whom He had cast out seven demons. (Mark 16:9)

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