

“Convincing Proofs”

“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom.”

—Acts 1:3, New International Version

DURING THE FORTY DAYS

following his resurrection, the risen Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples on multiple occasions, and gave many “convincing proofs” that he had been raised from the dead as a spirit being. He also spoke on these occasions about the kingdom of God, and the privilege his disciples would have of proclaiming it throughout the earth.

In Luke 24:1, we read, “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.” The expression “they” refers to a small group of women. Their names are given in verse 10: “It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them.”

Earlier in Luke’s Gospel, we are told that Jesus traveled with the apostles through “every city and

village,” proclaiming the glad message of the kingdom of God. In addition, there were “certain women” that traveled with him “which ministered unto him of their substance.” (Luke 8:1-3) These women were voluntarily contributing to support Jesus and the apostles. It has been suggested that Jesus’ seamless robe—a fitting representation of his human perfection—may have been a gift from one of these noble women.

Jesus never took up a collection or in any manner solicited money from people. As followers of Christ, we should likewise make no appeals for money. We should merely use our own means, and other funds if voluntarily given for use in the Lord’s service.

MARY MAGDALENE

Mary Magdalene was from the town of Magdala, which was located near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had healed Mary Magdalene of seven evil spirits which had possessed her. (vs. 2) Later, she was part of the small group of women who were present while Jesus was being crucified. (Matt. 27:55,56) She and the other women followed Joseph of Arimathaea to see where the tomb of Jesus was located, and how his body had been prepared for burial. (vss. 57-61) Two days later, after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other faithful women brought spices to the tomb, in order to more thoroughly anoint Jesus’ dead body. (Mark 16:1-2) They were anxious to bestow upon the lifeless remains of their beloved Master the last tokens of their esteem and love.

“On the first day of the week, Mary the Magdalene, cometh early, while it is yet, dark, unto the tomb,—and beholdeth the stone, already taken

away out of the tomb.” (John 20:1, *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*) Mary must have had great faith in coming to the tomb by herself, that somehow she would have the strength to roll away the large stone which had been placed over its entrance. She must have also ignored the thought that Jesus’ body might have started to decay, after having been dead and in the tomb for parts of three days. Just a few weeks earlier, when Jesus had asked for the stone to be rolled away from Lazarus’ tomb, Martha, one of Lazarus’ sisters, replied to the Lord, “By this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.”—John 11:39

LIVING ONE NOT AMONG THE DEAD

The other women joined Mary Magdalene at the tomb, and from the account in the book of Luke we read, “They found the stone, rolled away from the tomb; but, when they entered, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, while they were perplexing themselves concerning this, that lo! two men, stood near them, in dazzling raiment.”—Luke 24:2-4, *EBR*

The two men, dressed in white, “dazzling raiment,” were angels sent by God. (John 20:12) They said to the women, “Why seek ye the Living One with the dead? He is not here, but hath arisen: Remember how he spake unto you while yet he was in Galilee: Saying, as to the Son of Man, that he must needs be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified,—and, on the third day, arise.”—Luke 24:5-7, *EBR*

Jesus had previously told his disciples that he was going to be crucified and then be raised from

the dead. "He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31) The women at the tomb "remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest." However, when the apostles heard this message from the women, they did not believe it, and considered it as "idle tales," an incredible story.—Luke 24:8-11

Evidently none of Jesus' followers had thought of his resurrection. The women had brought spices to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. The message given to them by the two angels was not believed by the apostles and, most likely, not understood by the women. To these human minds, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the dead seemed difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend.

From the account given in John's Gospel, it appears Mary Magdalene remained at the tomb while the other women left to tell the apostles about the events which had transpired. We read: "Mary stood sobbing outside the tomb. As she sobbed, she glanced inside the tomb and noticed two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. Woman, they said to her, why are you sobbing? She said, Because they have taken away my master, and I do not know where they have put him! With these words she turned round and noticed Jesus standing—though she did not know it was Jesus. Woman, said Jesus, why are you sobbing? Who are you looking for? Supposing he was the gardener, she said, Oh, sir, if you carried him away, tell me

where you put him, and I will remove him.”—John 20:11-15, *James Moffatt Translation*

Mary Magdalene again demonstrated great faith and determination, telling the one whom she thought was “the gardener,” that somehow she would find the strength to carry away the body of Jesus. The Lord then revealed himself to Mary by speaking her name in an old, familiar way. “Mary! said Jesus. She started round and said, Rabboni! (a Hebrew word meaning teacher).” (vs. 16, *Moffatt*) How quickly Mary’s faith understood that it was Jesus! She did not ask why there were no visible marks from the nails on his hands or feet.

Jesus said to Mary, “Cease clinging to me. I have not ascended yet to the Father, but go to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to my Father and yours, to my God and yours.” Mary then showed her obedience to the Master: “Away went Mary of Magdala to the disciples with the news, I have seen the Lord!—telling them what he had said to her.” (vss. 17,18, *Moffatt*) Jesus appreciated Mary Magdalene’s faith, devotion, and determination. Thus, she had the privilege of receiving a “convincing proof,” being the first person to speak with the risen Lord, who had been resurrected as a spirit being by the mighty power of God.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

“That very day two of them [the Lord’s disciples] were on their way to a village called Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were conversing about all these events, and during their conversation and discussion Jesus himself overtook them and walked beside them, though they were

prevented from recognizing him.”—Luke 24:13-16, *Moffatt*

It probably took several hours for the two disciples to walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus. While we do not know where along this walk Jesus joined them, there was possibly a lengthy period of time during which Jesus was with them, during which they all would have had the opportunity to converse together. For that reason, this was perhaps one of Jesus’ longest-lasting appearances to his disciples during the forty days following his resurrection.

As they walked toward Emmaus, Jesus asked the two disciples, “What is all this you are debating on your walk? They stopped, looking downcast, and one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, Are you a lone stranger in Jerusalem, not to know what has been happening there?” Jesus questioned them again, saying, “What is that?” to which the disciples replied, “All about Jesus of Nazareth!”—vss. 17-19, *Moffatt*

We notice the wisdom of the risen Lord, and his use of questions during this discussion with the two disciples. Jesus knew, of course, why they were sad, because he had been invisibly present with them prior to joining them on the road to Emmaus. In similar fashion, on subsequent occasions during the forty days before he ascended, Jesus would appear to his disciples while they were talking about him and the events which had recently transpired. The disciples were thus in a better frame of mind to receive Jesus’ message to them, and the lessons he provided would leave a deeper impression.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus said concerning Jesus, “He was a prophet strong in action

and in utterance, but the high priests and our rulers delivered him up to be sentenced to death and had him crucified.” (Luke 24:19,20, *Moffatt*) Now they had lost confidence that Jesus was the Messiah, and said to this stranger, “Our own hope was that he would be the redeemer of Israel; but he is dead, and that is three days ago!” (vs. 21, *Moffatt*) Instead of Jesus becoming a great king of Israel, he had been crucified along side of two criminals, and this seemed to settle the matter in their minds that Jesus could not have been the Messiah.

Then the two disciples told this stranger about the events which had occurred earlier that day. “Some women of our number gave us a surprise; they were at the tomb early in the morning and could not find his body, but they came to tell us they had actually seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our company did go to the tomb and found things exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him.”—vss. 22-24, *Moffatt*

SUFFERING, THEN GLORY

The risen Lord began to build upon this testimony of the two disciples. He said to them, “O foolish men, with hearts so slow to believe, after all the prophets have declared! Had not the Christ to suffer thus and so enter his glory?” (vss. 25,26, *Moffatt*) Here we have another reason why Jesus gave “convincing proofs” to his disciples following his resurrection. It was necessary to teach them why he had to suffer, die, and rise again as a spirit being, and to show them that these things had been spoken of by the prophets of the Old Testament.

Then Jesus, beginning “with Moses and all the prophets . . . interpreted to them the passages referring to himself throughout the scriptures.” (vs. 27, *Moffatt*) We are not told exactly what the risen Lord said to the two disciples. Perhaps he explained to them how Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, his only son whom he loved, was a type or picture of God sending his only begotten Son, Jesus, whom he loved, into the world as a willing ransom sacrifice for Adam and his progeny—all mankind.—Gen. 22:1-18; I John 4:9,10; I Tim. 2:5,6

Jesus might have reminded them of Moses’ day, and that by keeping the Passover, the Israelites were delivered from bondage in Egypt. The Passover lamb which was selected, a male of the first year, without blemish, was a type or picture of the perfect man Jesus, who willingly offered up himself as the ransom sacrifice for Adam and all mankind. (Exod. 12:1-14; I Cor. 5:7; Heb. 7:26,27) At the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, John the Baptist had spoken of him in this way, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

The Apostle Peter referred to Jesus as an unblemished lamb, writing: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”—I Pet. 1:18-21

God instructed the nation of Israel that none of the bones of the Passover lamb were to be broken. (Exod. 12:46) In the hours following Jesus' crucifixion, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves in order for their deaths to occur before sundown—the start of the Jewish Sabbath day. The Scriptures specifically state, however, that the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs, because he was already dead. (John 19:31-33) We are emphatically told in verse 36, "These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken"—just like the Passover lamb—and as also prophesied in the Psalms.—Ps. 34:20

Jesus may have also recounted the Psalms which foretold of his betrayal, sufferings, and death, as well as his subsequent resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. (Ps. 41:9; 22:1-18; 31:5; 118:22; 110:1) To the two disciples walking to Emmaus, this stranger had shown that the things which had discouraged them were the very things which the prophets had foretold concerning the Messiah.

CONSTRAINING THE STRANGER

As they reached the town of Emmaus, the stranger continued to walk on. However, the two disciples insisted he stay with them and come to their home. We read: "They constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them." (Luke 24:29) In this verse, the word "constrained" is translated from a Greek word used only one other time in the New Testament, when Lydia "constrained" Paul and Silas to stay at her home.

(Acts 16:15) This Greek word carries a strong connotation, and has the meaning “to employ force contrary to nature and right.” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*) We can picture the two disciples gently holding this stranger by the arm, while urging him to stay with them.

The stranger complied, and stayed with them at their home in Emmaus. As they assembled at a table to eat, he “took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” The two disciples then realized that this stranger was Jesus himself. Having accomplished his purpose, the risen Lord then “vanished out of their sight.”—Luke 24:30,31

Jesus taught the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and gave them “convincing proofs” of his resurrection in several ways. First, he explained the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies concerning himself in a logical and understandable manner. Then, by his act of blessing and breaking bread at the table with them, he brought to their remembrance an example of things he had done during his ministry. Finally, he demonstrated that he was no longer “the man” Jesus, but rather had been “changed” and was now a spirit being, with the ability to come and go as the wind.—John 3:8

The disciples then said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32) As we realize the fulfillment of God’s promises in the past, may our heart likewise “burn within us,” in order that we might exercise even greater faith in the fulfillment of the assurances of his Word which relate to the future.

The two disciples were so moved by this experience that they immediately turned around and traveled the seven miles back to Jerusalem, probably walking most of the way in the dark of night, in order to tell the other disciples. (Luke 24:33-35) Indeed, as we receive a blessing from the Truth, and our studies and discussions with the brethren, let us share it with others, that they might also receive a blessing. We recall the words of the prophet: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."—Mal. 3:16

APPEARING IN DIFFERENT FORMS

After the two disciples reached Jerusalem and found other followers of Christ gathered together, Jesus appeared and "stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." (Luke 24:36) However, they were afraid, supposing that they had seen a spirit. The Lord said to them, "Why are ye troubled? . . . Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."—vss. 37-39

We note that Jesus used the expression "flesh and bones," and not "flesh and blood." In the Old Testament, blood was associated with human life. The fact that Jesus did not use the word "blood" indicates that what they were seeing, although giving the outward appearance of being human, was not a body of the earthly, human nature. Jesus' sacrifice was completed when he died on the cross.

His human life was forever given up, and his “precious blood” was poured out unto death, in order that redemption and atonement for mankind might be secured. (I Pet. 1:19) Once again we have confirmation from the Old Testament: “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”—Lev. 17:11

The “flesh and bones” in which the resurrected Jesus appeared on this occasion were only a visual materialization, used strictly for the benefit of his disciples. The Lord knew that if his disciples could see flesh and bones that bore a physical resemblance to their Master as he looked during the time of his earthly ministry, they would have less fear, and therefore be able to listen better to what he had to tell them.

On other occasions following his resurrection, the risen Lord appeared in different physical manifestations to his followers. To Mary, he appeared as a gardener. To the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, he appeared as a stranger. To Peter and several others in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, he appeared as a visitor on the shore.—John 21:3,4

By showing himself to them in different physical appearances, Jesus proved that none of these forms was the actual body which he now possessed—that of a highly exalted spirit being. Indeed, on nearly every occasion during these forty days, Jesus’ disciples did not recognize him by physical appearance, but by his words, his voice, or his conduct.

WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS

After alleviating their fears, Jesus explained, just as he had to the two on the road to Emmaus, all of

the Old Testament prophecies and psalms which foretold that he would be betrayed, suffer and die, and then rise from the dead on the third day. (Luke 24:44-46) He then gave them a commission, that their future work would be to preach “repentance and remission of sins . . . in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” They were to be “witnesses” of these “convincing proofs” concerning Jesus’ resurrection, not only by what they saw, but especially by their increased understanding, through the Holy Spirit—“power from on high”—which would soon come upon them.—vss. 47-49

Peter also wrote about the disciples being “witnesses” of Jesus’ resurrection, saying, “Him God raised up the third day, and permitted him to become manifest, not to all the people, but to those witnesses previously chosen by God, to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to proclaim to the people, and to fully testify that this is he who has been appointed by God the judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear testimony.”—Acts 10:40-43, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

TRIED AND TESTED BEFORE ENTERING INTO GLORY

One of the most important teachings Jesus provided to his disciples during the forty days following his resurrection is found in his words, quoted earlier in our lesson—“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26) Many Scriptures emphasize this principle of having faith tried and tested unto death first, before entering into glory. This

arrangement applied not only to Jesus, but also to each individual who will become part of the Christ, head and body.

The apostles testified, saying, “If children, also heirs; heirs, indeed, of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed, we suffer together, so that we may be also glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of the present time, as unworthy of comparison with the future glory to be revealed in us.” (Rom. 8:17,18, *WED*) “Rejoice, . . . as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”—I Pet. 4:13

May these “convincing proofs” of Jesus’ resurrection help us increase our faith in all of God’s promises. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”—chap. 1:3,4 ■