

JEFFERSON'S BIBLE IS A PAGE SHORT—2**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

The appearances were a reward for belief. History says that there were more than a million Jews in Jerusalem for the Passover when Jesus was resurrected. In contrast to His second coming, when “every eye shall see him” (Revelation 1:7), only a relative handful saw Him then. Not counting the five hundred who saw Him at one time (I Corinthians 15:6), less than twenty are named as having seen Him after the resurrection. Who were they? Why did they get to see Jesus when others did not?

As far as we know not a single unbeliever saw Jesus after His death. He appeared to every one of His close friends and to other believers, but not a single enemy got to see Him. “*They also that pierced him*” (Revelation 1:7) will see Him at the end of time, but they did not get to see Him fresh from the grave. Had the story been invented, Jesus would have gone to Pilate, Caiphas, and the Sanhedrin and had the last laugh. He would have climbed the temple and spoke to the masses. But Jesus only visited small groups of believers in remote areas or indoors. These private rendezvous bolstered the flickering faith of those who would be the witnesses to His deity.

Why limit His visitations to friends? Perhaps a clue can be found in His words to one-skeptical Thomas: “*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*” (John 20:29). The greater blessing is for those of us who believe by seeing only with the eye of faith.

THE APPEARANCES LOOKED AT INDIVIDUALLY

Mary Magdalene saw Jesus alive early Sunday morning (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-16). If men had been making a list of those who got to see the resurrected Lord, Mary Magdalene would not have been on it. Jesus, though, thought she was important enough to put at the top of His (Mark 16:9).

Jesus first appeared to the one who perhaps loved Him most. We must first meet Mary Magdalene before Jesus became a part of her life (Luke 8:2). She appears a friendless, scorned, poor, and emotionally hurt woman. Jesus rid her of seven devils, and she never forgot it.

Mary Magdalene personifies the love and the devotion of one who owed everything to Jesus, and who knew it. She stands in the center of almost every scene in Jesus’ passion.

- She was there at the foot of the cross (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25).
- She was there when they laid Jesus in the tomb (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47).
- She was there at the tomb, the first to arrive on resurrection morning (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1).

In this scene, she is heartbroken. She has lost her closest friend to death, and, worse, she thinks that His body had been stolen (John 20:11-18). She wept uncontrollably. Then she saw Him! Her winter turned to summer; her broken heart was mended.

Three “other women” saw Jesus alive at the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10). These included the “other Mary,” not Jesus’ mother, but James and Joses’ mother (Mark 16:1; cf. 15:40). Jesus’ mother is not mentioned as visiting the grave. The beloved disciple had taken her to his own home (John 19:27) and possibly hindered her from going to “the grace to weep there” (cf. John 11:31). He could have interpreted Jesus’ words from the cross as meaning, “Take her away from here, to spare her further grief.”

Mark also says that “Salome” was there (16:1). She was Zebedee’s wife, the

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

COMMON SENSE CHRISTIANITY:
TRUE FAITH WORKS

Text: _____

I. James Presents A _____

Notes:

II. James Presents A _____

Notes:

III. James Presents A _____

Notes:

OUR COMMISSION

Text: _____

I. A _____

Notes:

II. A _____

Notes:

III. A _____

Notes:

mother of James and John. And Joanna, wife of Chusa, Herod's steward was with them (Luke 24:10; cf. 8:3).

These women were sympathetic and kind, and along with Mary Magdalene, were more dedicated than any others during these long, hard hours. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had not been on His side until after His death. The disciples forsook Him before, during, and after the death and burial.

The apostles may not have thought the women very important (they thought their words were idle tales [Luke 24:11]), but they were important to Jesus. He appeared to them before He did to any of the twelve disciples. Their names are recorded in the most important book ever written. Matthew Henry made another interesting point here: "As Christ in the grave was beloved of the saints, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ. Death and the grave cannot slacken that bond of love which is between them." If you are a dedicated, faithful, regular, consistent member of Christ's church, God notices your efforts and will reward your service (I Corinthians 4:5).

Peter saw Jesus alive later that Sunday (Luke 24:34; I Corinthians 15:5; cf. Mark 16:7). Mark's biography takes special notice of Peter, and it was Mark alone who recorded the angel's words, "Tell Peter" (Mark 16:7). Why this special mention? "Tell his disciples and Peter" does not mean that Peter was not still a disciple. The meaning is, "Tell his disciples, and especially Peter." Before Peter's fall, Jesus had prayed for him that his faith should not fail (Luke 22:32); and as the prayer of Jesus was always heard (John 11:42), Peter still retained faith sufficient to be a disciple, though he fell into sin.

Now Peter merits a special appearance (Luke 23:34; I Corinthians 15:5). Why single out Peter by name and then appear to him alone? First, Peter might have feared that this good news did not pertain to him. Had the angel said only, "Tell his disciples," Peter would have been likely to sigh and say, "I doubt He still looks at me as a disciple, for I disowned Him, and deserve to be disowned by Him."

Second, this good news would be most welcome to Him. It will be good news to all the disciples, but especially to Peter who was sorrowing over denying the Lord. Jesus rose for sinners' justification (Romans 4:25), so news of His resurrection is especially sweet to those mourning sin.

*-Allen Webster
to be continued*

FROM DOUBT TO DEDICATION: THE STORY OF A NEWLY FORMED FISHER OF MEN

The life of Simon Peter was one wrought with every imaginable state of life. At times there could be found no more committed and steadfast servant of Jesus. However, times arose when even the lost sinners of the world could not do more harm to the cause than could he. As the old saying goes, when Peter was hot he was hot, but when he was not he was not. If, though, we were to go back in time and briefly examine his life before he became an apostle of the Lord, I wonder what we would find? Would Peter's previous life reflect the same strengths and weaknesses he showed during his apostleship? Questions such as these must largely go unanswered for the limited information that is provided; however, the Bible does give record of one day—one day in which a complete picture of Peter is easily seen:

“And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 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. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him” (Luke 5:1-11).

This is a lengthy excerpt, but every verse is necessary to get the complete picture of Simon in his journey from doubt to dedication. And the reason such importance is found in this account is because this is a trip that many must take in their lives. Some are blessed with the opportunity to be reared in a Christian home and in a Godly environment to such an extent that doubt never really becomes an issue. However, for the vast majority of the world, whether reared in a Christian home or not, doubt is a hurdle over which many must jump if ever they will become a faithful Christian. What is seen in the life of Peter as he makes this trip that can benefit modern man in his similar state?

First, notice that doubt, to a degree, was an issue with Peter in the beginning. When Jesus first made his appearance and requested that Peter launch back out and prepare for a great catch, Peter was less than immediately responsive. In fact, he tries to reason with the Lord as to why it would be of no benefit for them to re-launch into the deep. But, not being one to argue, Peter hesitatingly did as he was told. No, the degree of doubt in Peter's heart was not as great as it is in the hearts of some. Peter did not doubt to the degree of atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, or any other “-ism.” It was just, that from experience, Peter doubted the result would be worth the effort. Modern man suffers with doubt from one end of the spectrum to the other, all of varying degrees. But the important point is seen, that until doubt is overcome, dedication will never be found. What if Peter had adamantly refused to do as he was asked by Jesus and regardless of any further persuasion, his boat remained docked? Peter's doubt would have completely defined his character the rest of his life. The doubt itself was not lethal, but only because he allowed his doubt to be tested. He was willing, for the sake of surety, to step outside of his comfort zone and see if there was something to this claim. Too many people in life are satisfied in their doubt, not willing for it to be tested even for the sake of surety. Peter's journey from doubt to dedication demanded that his doubt be put to the test and let Jesus prove Himself to him. Such must take place if doubt is going to be defeated today. We must be willing to step outside of the comfort of doubt and allow God to prove Himself through His word which is truth, and when we allow that to happen, He will succeed every time to such an extent that we, like Thomas, will fall prostrate in awe and loudly and proudly proclaim, *“My Lord and my God”* (John 20:28). Peter proves to us that doubt is not a death nail to the soul, but merely an obstacle that must be overcome. And when that takes place, we, too, will be on our way from doubt to dedication.

*-Andy Brewer
to be continued*