

(for May 9, Easter 6)

### **Views from the Pews: Seeing and believing**

The Gospels record ten appearances of the risen Jesus, five on the day of his resurrection, and five more before the ascension. Between these pivotal events, he

*"gave many convincing proofs of that he was alive ...over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3)*

Many of his appearances were to people who had known him well, but they didn't recognise him. Psychologists tell us that our eyes are literally blind to perceiving anything that our brains insist is impossible. The women in the garden, and the two disciples on the road, *knew* he was dead; they simply could not imagine him alive again, or see his risen body as real.

To convince them, he provided physical proof. When he broke the bread at Emmaus, *"their eyes were opened and they recognised him"* (Luke 24.31). He showed the others: *"Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."* (Luke 24:39). Jesus offered Thomas a chance to touch him, in order that he could *"Stop doubting and believe."* (John 20:27).

Jesus' life after the resurrection was based on Biblical prophecy. He drew his disciples away from supernatural speculation towards the Biblical foundations of his resurrected body:

*"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24.44).*

Amid all the doubt and confusion, Jesus presented himself to selected witnesses as a touchable, physical human body. In this form, totally convincing to them and incomprehensible to us, he prepared them to understand his life and mission as they never had before.

Science depends on repeatable observations, so has nothing to say about a one-off event such as the Resurrection. Archaeologists can confirm only biblical locations, not what happened there. But, as in criminal trials, an unverified observation can be proven from its consequences. We don't need to know *how* the disciples experienced Jesus as the risen Messiah. It is enough to see the change in them as heart-stopping evidence that they met an irresistible something – *Someone* – who transformed them from timid, confused peasants to apostles brave enough to defy the Jewish authorities in Jesus' name.

*Kim King*