





An Empty Tomb

Matthew 28

Mark 16

Luke 24

John 20:1-23

Resurrection

Tell the story from the book of John, but bring in information from the other gospels.

The story of the resurrection can be challenging to reconcile all of the gospel accounts. The Word of God is inerrant, and the gospels are not inconsistent. After research and review of multiple commentaries, this is a possible conclusion.

In the gospel of John, it appears that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb alone. But Matthew and Mark mention that Mary Magdalene was with the other women at the tomb. One possible explanation could be that the women planned to meet at the tomb, and Mary Magdalene got there first. She could have run to tell the apostles what happened, and while she was gone the other women arrived. They would have entered into the empty tomb while Mary Magdalene was on the way to tell the disciples. Then it could have been the other women who saw the two angels that seem to be outside the tomb that Luke recorded in Luke 24:4-7. When these other women leave the tomb to go back to the others, Mary Magdalene arrives back at the tomb, now with Peter and John (John 20:3-10). After Peter and John leave, Mary Magdalene stays and sees the two angels inside the tomb, and she is the first one to whom the resurrected Jesus appears (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18). Later, as the other women go back to tell the apostles, Jesus appears to them also (Matthew 28:9-10). With these events being so closely connected and happening so quickly, it would make sense that Matthew, Mark, and Luke may have listed Mary Magdalene among the group of women at the tomb. John's account simply adds more detail and does not contradict.

This story follows the death and crucifixion of Jesus.

It is now Sunday, the first day of the week. The Sabbath is now over, and people can move freely. Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb *when it is still dark* (John 20:1) and sees that the stone has been removed from the tomb. If we go with the conclusion in the commentary, it seems that Mary saw that the stone was gone, and ran back to tell Peter and John that the tomb was empty, and that she did not know where they put Jesus' body.

Women were coming to the tomb bringing sweet spices to put on Jesus' body, and they got there as the sun was rising (Mark 16:2). Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary" are mentioned by name, but Luke 24:10 also mentions Joanna and "other women" so we do not know for sure how many. Luke tells us that on the way there, they were discussing how they were going to remove the stone.

But when they got there, they saw that the huge stone had been rolled away.

Matthew tells us that there had been a great earthquake, and it seems that this had happened before anyone arrived.

Discuss:

Do you think people felt this? Surely they must have.

Do you think people wondered what was happening?

The angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away.

And the angel was sitting on the stone. His face was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. Luke's account says there were two angels, and their clothes were shining.

Discuss:

The chief priests had asked the Romans to set guards around the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). They told Pilate, the Roman leader, that Jesus had said that he was going to rise again after three days. They were concerned that the disciples were going to steal the body and tell everyone that Jesus had risen. To them this would be worse than when he was alive.



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Discuss:

There was an earthquake, and an angel with a face like lightning (that might be scary!) and very shiny WHITE clothes comes and sits on the huge stone after rolling it away.

Matthew 28:4 says the guards were so scared that they shook and fell like dead men. (They went later to give messages to the priest so we can assume they fainted.)

The angel told the women (Matthew 28:5-7) that Jesus was risen, and told them to come see. They went inside the tomb (Mark 16:5-6) and were afraid when they saw a young man dressed in long white clothes.

He told them not to be afraid, to look where Jesus had been laid, and to go tell the disciples *and Peter* that they would see him in Galilee.

It is interesting that Peter is the only name that the angel specifically mentions. Peter impulsively cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest in Jesus' defense, yet a short time later he denied him three times just as Jesus had predicted. Peter was very ashamed, and possibly the angel specifically mentioned Peter to reassure him after this denial.

Luke mentions two angels; it seems as if they appeared suddenly while the women were there. The women saw the angels, were afraid, and bowed down to the earth.

The angels asked, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

The angels told them women that Jesus was not there, but reminded them how he had told them that he would be crucified and rise again on the third day. The women went back to tell the disciples. They were afraid, and they did not tell anyone but ran straight to tell the disciples.

Discuss:

Why were they afraid?

This was incredulous. They were amazed and in shock; they saw an angel that told them Jesus was alive. But they were also afraid because of the authorities. If they would have had television, the crucifixion of Jesus would have been headline news. The disciples and followers of Jesus were afraid because they thought they might also be arrested, which is why Peter denied Jesus. After the crucifixion, the disciples did not know if the authorities would be coming after them too. If people found out that the body was gone, they were afraid of what the consequences might be for the followers of Jesus.

When the women told the disciples, they did not believe them. But two disciples wanted to see if it was true. Peter and John got up and ran to the tomb. John refers to himself in his gospel as "the other disciple," or "the disciple who Jesus loved." John tells the reader that John ran faster than Peter, and he was the first one to arrive at the tomb. Mary Magdalene must have followed them back to the tomb.

John bent down and looked into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. When Peter got there, he went into the tomb.

He saw the linen clothes, and the cloth that was wrapped around his head was wrapped separately by itself.

Then John went into the tomb and when he saw, he believed. There is something to this.

For some reason, seeing these linen cloths lying there made John believe.



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Different commentaries have been written on this. On the day of the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus brought Jesus to the tomb. Nicodemus brought a 100 pound mixture of spices and ointments, and they wrapped Jesus' body in the linen cloths. These would have been strips of cloth used to wrap the corpse, in the same way that Lazarus was wrapped when Jesus told the people to unwrap him. Joseph and Nicodemus would have put the spices and ointments on the linen. Some commentaries believe that the spices and ointment would have hardened when they dried, leaving a hard shell. When they looked in and saw the cloths, lying there, they would have been hardened and untouched in the shape of a body. If someone would have stolen the body and removed the cloths, they would have had to have been unwrapped or cut. But if the linen was still *in the shape of a body* that could explain why John saw, and believed. He would have seen what appeared to be an empty mummy. The head wrap would have been separate from the body, and it is not clear whether it was a hardened shell, or simply wrapped separately.

After they saw the linen and believed, Peter and John left, but Mary Magdalene stayed behind (John 20:11). Mary was weeping, and she looked inside the tomb.

When she looked in, there were two angels in white sitting there: one at the head, and the other at the feet of where Jesus had been.

They asked her why she was crying, and she told them it was because someone took Jesus, and she did not know where they laid his body.

After Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him. He asked her why she was weeping, and who she was looking for. She thought Jesus was the gardener, and told him that if they had taken him somewhere, to tell her where he was, and she would get him and take him away.

Then Jesus said, "Mary."

When he called her by name, she recognized him.

She turned around and said, "Rabboni," which means, Master.

Then Jesus tells her not to touch him, because he has not yet ascended to the Father. This is interesting; he appeared to Mary before he went to the Father. He told her to go to the disciples, and tell them that he would ascend to the Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.

Mark 16:9 tells us that Mary Magdalene was the first person that Jesus appeared to after he was risen. After this, Mary Magdalene went back and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus and what he said to her. But Mark 16:11 tells us that they did not believe her.

Soon after, Jesus appeared to some of the other women as they were going back to tell the disciples. It isn't completely clear if he had ascended to the Father before this, but the other women held him by the feet and worshiped him (Matthew 28:9).

Meanwhile, the guards who had seen the angel and the earthquake went back to tell the chief priests what happened.

Discuss:

What would you do if you were a guard?



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The priests and elders held a meeting, and then gave large amounts of money to pay off the soldiers. They told the soldiers to tell everyone that Jesus' disciples had come and stolen the body while the guards were asleep. And then they told the guards that if the Roman governor heard about it, they would calm him down and keep the guards out of trouble. The guards took the money and did what they were told and the Jews believed the story (Matthew 28:11-15).

Discuss:

The chief priests knew what had really happened and still did not believe on Jesus.

Jesus appeared a few other times to his disciples, and it seems it was that day. He appeared to see people who were walking and talking about the events of the week. They did not recognize him until they had been with him most of the day and they ate bread with him.

After that he appeared to the eleven disciples while they were eating (Mark 16:14). But Jesus reprimanded them for their unbelief and hardness of heart that they did not believe the people who told them he was alive.

Discuss:

According to Jesus, his own disciples had hardened hearts. They had been with him all the time, and yet they still had hardened hearts that manifested in unbelief.

He appeared to the disciples the same night he was risen, and this could have possibly been the same instance recorded in Mark 16:14, but is recorded in John 20:19. This time John specifies that the doors were shut. The disciples were all together and they were hiding because they were afraid of the Jews.

Discuss:

What were they afraid of?

Jesus came and stood in the room with them. They did not open the door, he just appeared. Jesus is able to do things in his resurrected body that he was not able to do before. He appears and says,

"Peace be to you."

Then he showed the disciples his (nail-pierced) hands and his (pierced) side.

He sent his disciples as the Father has sent him. He breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Ghost.

Jesus in the Story



Jesus had to die to save us from our sins. Because of Adam's sin, every man is born into sin.

But in Christ, all who believe are made alive.

Jesus had to be raised from the dead.

If he died and was not resurrected, we would still be in our sins, and, "most miserable."

If Jesus would have stayed in the grave, then our faith would be in vain, and we would still be responsible for our sins. But through his grace and resurrection, those who believe on Him are saved by faith.

There were many things in the Old Testament that have New Testament counterparts.

Sin began in a garden, and Jesus had to be arrested in a garden after submitting to the will of the Father.

After the resurrection Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for the gardener.

Because Jesus triumphed over death, it brought us victory and allowed believers to walk in a new life.

Our old sinful man is crucified with Christ, and we are no longer slaves to sin but free from sin (Romans 6:3-7).

Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

49. An Empty Tomb

Read John 20

1. Who did Mary Magdalene think Jesus was?
2. What did Mary think happened to Jesus?
3. What was in the tomb?
4. Do you think a thief would have left the grave clothes?

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

50. Unable to Speak

Read Luke 1:7, 18, 20, 63-64

1. What do we know about Zacharias and Elizabeth?
2. How did Zacharias respond when Gabriel told him the news?
3. Why did Gabriel say Zacharias would not be able to speak?
4. When was Zacharias able to speak again?

Psalms 139:4-5

For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD you know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me.

51. A Child Is Born

Read Isaiah 9:7

1. When will the government of Jesus stop increasing?
2. What else is always increasing?
3. Whose throne will Jesus sit on?
4. What is his throne established with?

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

52. From the East

1. What gifts did the wise men bring?
2. Why did the wise men not go back to talk to Herod after they found Jesus?
3. Where did Joseph and Mary take Jesus?

Isaiah 60:3, 6

The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. They shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.



