

FPFWC Christian Development



The Birth of the Church

April 2023

Spring Quarter

April 1, 2023

Lesson #1 – The Empty Tomb

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 24:1-12

ICE BREAKER –

1. What is the significance for believers that Jesus was resurrected in body?
2. Why is it important to remember scriptures in our Christian Walk?
3. How do we guard against forgetting that which has already been taught regarding our faith?

Key Verse – “They said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. —Luke 24:5b–6a

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today’s Scripture follows after the narrative of Jesus’ crucifixion and death (Luke 23:26–46). Torture and execution by crucifixion was one way that the Roman Empire demonstrated the power of the state over its subjects. The brutal process of crucifixion slowly killed its victims as they bled, became dehydrated, and suffered shock and asphyxiation. That Jesus died after only several hours on the cross was a surprise (see Mark 15:44). Making a public exhibition of a prolonged and humiliating death was the primary aim of crucifixion.

The bodies of those crucified frequently remained on the crosses for several days after death as a spectacle and as a passive threat to all who would oppose the ruling powers. However, such a display did not occur for Jesus’ body. Joseph, a man from the city of Arimathaea and a member of the council of the Sanhedrin, received Pilate’s permission to take Jesus’ body (Matthew 27:57–58; Mark 15:43–45; Luke 23:50–52; John 19:38). Joseph had certain wealth, enabling him to own a rock-hewn tomb (Matthew 27:60). That Jesus was buried in this man’s tomb indicated a level of love that Joseph had for Jesus; strangers were not generally buried in the tomb of another family.

Jesus’ body was wrapped in burial clothes as it was entombed (Matthew 27:59; Luke 23:53; compare John 11:44). Aromatic spices were placed with the burial clothes and in the tomb to cover the stench of decay (19:40; compare 11:39). Because Jesus was buried the evening before Sabbath (Mark 15:42), additional burial spices would have to wait to be administered until after the Sabbath (Luke 23:55–56).

Joseph’s tomb was like many others that were carved in rock. Chiseled niches allowed for several bodies to be buried in one tomb. A large, flat stone would seal the tomb’s entrance and prevent thieves from stealing valuable artifacts or even

bodies. Tombs remained sealed until all that remained of a body were its bones. Family would then enter the tomb and place the bones in a box called an ossuary.

Many first-century Jews believed in the physical resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees being a notable exception (see Acts 4:1–2; 23:8). This doctrine can be traced to Old Testament texts (Job 19:25–27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1–2, 13). Other Jewish texts describe a physical resurrection of the righteous dead (see 2 Baruch 50–51; 2 Maccabees 7:9, 14, 23). By the time of the first century AD, the doctrine of the resurrection of the righteous dead had been accepted by several parties of Judaism, especially the Pharisees (see Acts 23:6–8).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had prophesied regarding His death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 17:22–23; Mark 8:31; 9:30–31; Luke 9:22, 44; 18:31–33; John 2:19). However, the concept of a suffering and resurrected Savior was incomprehensible to many people, even Jesus' own disciples (Luke 9:45; 18:34).

Matthew 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; and John 20:1–29 are parallel texts to today's Scripture. Each Gospel writer included certain details found only in his specific narrative. Examples include a "great earthquake" (Matthew 28:2), a "young man ... clothed in a long white garment" (Mark 16:5), the women's silence (16:8), the women's interaction with the resurrected Jesus (Matthew 28:9–10), and Mary Magdalene's experience at the tomb (John 20:1–2). These differences do not invalidate the Gospel accounts; they highlight the different emphases that each Gospel writer wanted to stress.

LESSON COMMENTARY

24:1–3. Luke assumed the reader would understand that it was the women who came to the tomb (**they came**; cf. 23:49, 55) to complete the burial rituals for Jesus (24:1). Note that Luke recorded that women were the first to learn of the resurrection. That it was **on the first day of the week** and **at early dawn** (24:1a) accords with the accounts of the other gospels. Luke had not previously mentioned **the stone**, which was now **rolled away** (24:2). On entering the tomb, the women did not find **the body of the Lord Jesus** (24:3). Luke's emphasis was on the absence of the "body"—it was a "bodily resurrection." Furthermore, the fuller identification, "Lord Jesus," conveyed something of the import of the resurrection—it proved His claim to lordship (cf. Ac 22:22–26; Eph 1:20–21).

24:4–5a. **Two men** appeared (24:4a; only Luke mentioned both, one of whom was the only speaker, hence Mark's one man, Mk 16:5, and Matthew's one angel, Mt 28:2–3, 5). They were clearly angels, as revealed by the suddenness of their appearance, the description of their clothing (Lk 24:4b), and the insight they were able to give to the women (cf. 24:5–6). This was later made explicit in v. 23. This manifestation of angelic glory was startling and caused the women look away in fear (24:5a).

24:5b–8. The message of the angels was stunning. First, there was a question: **Why do you seek the living One among the dead?** (24:5b), which came as a mild rebuke. Before the women could protest (it was after all quite reasonable for them to be at the tomb looking for Jesus' body) the angel added: **He is not here, but He has risen** (24:6a). This was quickly followed by an explanation (24:6b–7), emphasizing the "divine necessity" of the events that had led to this moment (24:7,

must be). In effect, the angel was saying to the women, “You should have expected all these events—the passion, the cross, and the resurrection—because this is what Jesus was telling you all along.” Luke noted that they **remembered His words** (24:8). It was not the evidence of their own eyes—an empty tomb—or even the words of angels, that convinced them. Rather, it was the memory of the Word that Jesus taught and now confirmed by His resurrection that brought them to realize that He had **risen!**

24:9–12. The women immediately returned to the city and **reported all these things** to the disciples (24:9). Including the names of some of the women (24:10) is yet another example of how Luke gave prominence to the role of women in the gospel narrative. The report of the women did not receive immediate acceptance (24:11) but prompted Peter to go out to the tomb in haste; he **ran to the tomb** (24:12a). While he saw the evidences of the empty tomb and the linen wrappings—and he was impressed (**marveling**)—the impression from what Luke wrote was that Peter did not yet believe (24:12b).

LESSON NUGGET – The stone was rolled away, the body of Jesus was gone, and the women were perplexed. Why? Because they had forgotten His word. Today, angels do not come to remind us of His word: the Holy Spirit has that ministry (John 14:26). Yield to the Spirit and let Him remind you of the promises that will encourage your heart.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word For Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary