

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. "He is not here" are the words from the angel to the women at the tomb
2. It is also the reason why we're here today
3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the Christian faith
4. Without it there is no faith, no truth and no hope of a future resurrection
5. John Calvin said, "The resurrection of Christ is the most important article of our faith, and without it the hope of eternal life is extinguished."
6. That is so true because the atheist says, "it all ends at the grave"
7. "The body is annihilated"
8. "We cease to exist"
9. It this were true then what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:16-19 is true:  

(16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; (17) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.
10. But we are not the ones to be pitied
11. Those who have rejected Christ are
12. Because Jesus did rise just as He said
13. And there are many proofs given in the Scripture for it
14. Let's consider 5 of them this morning
15. The first is...

## **LESSON**

### **I. The Empty Tomb**

Listen to...

#### 1. The Testimony of the Gospel Writers

##### 1. They all wrote about the empty tomb

##### 1. Matthew's account occurs in chapter 28:1-6

(1) Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

(2) And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

(3) And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

(4) The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

(5) The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

(6) He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

##### 2. Mark's account occurs in chapter 16:1-6

(1) When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.

(2) Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

(3) They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

(4) Looking up, they \*saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

(5) Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

(6) And he \*said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.

### 3. Luke’s account occurs in chapter 24:1-7

(1) But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

(2) And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

(3) but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

(4) While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;

(5) and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?

(6) He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee,

(7) saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”

### 4. John’s account occurs in chapter 20:1-9

(1) Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene \*came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and \*saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

(2) So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

(3) So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.

(4) The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;

(5) and stooping and looking in, he \*saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

(6) And so Simon Peter also \*came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he \*saw the linen wrappings lying there,

(7) and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

(8) So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

(9) For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

## 2. All accounts include one or more women at the tomb

1. Matthew records that “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb” (28:1)
2. Both Matthew and John tell us that the “other Mary” was “the mother of James and Joseph and the wife of Clopas (Mat.27:56; Jn.19:25)
3. Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us “Salome, the mother of James and John and the wife of Zebedee (Mk.16:1; cf. Mat.27:56), and Joanna (Lk.24:10) were also there, Matthew focuses only on the two Marys” (John MacArthur, Matthew 24-28, p.307)
4. John’s account tells us only about Mary Magdalene and not the other women
5. From all accounts “The women obviously thought Jesus would still be in the grave and would remain there, or else they would have not brought the anointing spices. They had not come to see Jesus risen but to look at the grave where they expected His body to still be lying” (Ibid., MacArthur, p.307)
6. So upon their arrival at the tomb, they saw the stone covering the tomb was rolled away

7. Mary Magdalene, frightened by this immediately ran to Peter and John thinking that someone had stolen the body of Jesus (Jn.20:2)
8. The other women still at the tomb were greeted by two angels and given the news of Jesus' resurrection
9. Later, after Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb, she is greeted by the same two angels and then by Jesus (John 20:11-17)

### 3. All accounts include of the appearance of angels

1. Matthew and Mark state only one angel at the tomb (Mat.28:2; Mk.16:5), but Luke and John say there were two (Lk.24:5; Jn.20:12)
2. All accounts record the same message from the angels, "He is not here, He has risen"

## 2. The Testimony of the Guards (Mat.28:11-15)

### 1. The report from the guards (v.11)

1. Matthew 27:66 says that the tomb was "secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard."
2. A.T. Robertson says that the method of sealing the stone at Jesus' tomb was "...probably by a cord stretched across the stone and sealed at each end as in Daniel 6:17. The sealing was done in the presence of the Roman authority and power. They did their best to prevent theft and the resurrection, but they overreached themselves and provided additional witness to the fact of the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus."
3. Henry Sumner Maine, member of the Supreme Council of India; formerly Reader on Jurisprudence and the Civil Law at the Middle Temple, and Regius Professor of the Civil Law in the University of Cambridge, speaks of the legal authority attached to the Roman seal. He points out that it was actually "considered as a mode of authentication."
4. In the area of jurisprudence, Maine continues, "We may observe, that the seals of Roman Wills and other documents of importance did not only serve as the index of the presence or assent of the signatory, but were also literally fastenings which had to be broken before the writing could be inspected."

5. Josh McDowell says, “Considering in like manner the securing of Jesus’ tomb, the Roman seal affixed thereon was meant to prevent any attempted vandalizing of the sepulcher. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb’s entrance would have broken the seal and thus incurred the wrath of Roman law” (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, p.209).

6. Professor D. D. Whedon says, “The door could not be opened, therefore, without breaking the seal; which was a crime against the authority of the proprietor of the seal.”

## 2. The meeting of the Sanhedrin (v.12a)

"And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together"

The Sanhedrin was the Supreme Court of ancient Israel

It was made up of 70 men and the high priest

They met in the temple in Jerusalem

They met everyday except during festivals and the Sabbath

They dissolved after continued persecution of the Roman empire

They last binding decision was in 358 A.D. when the Hebrew calendar was adopted

Here they are part of the trial of Jesus

## 3. The bribery of the soldiers (vv.12b-15)

"(12) ...they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, (13) and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ (14) “And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” (15) And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day."

“Evidence for the resurrection is supplied by the very story that denies it.

And because it came from Jesus’ enemies rather than His friends, it should be all the more convincing to skeptics.

Intending to conceal the truth, the Sanhedrin and the soldiers actually

reinforced it” (John MacArthur, Matthew 24-28, p.324).

4. So from the biblical account, the tomb was empty
5. Jesus had risen from the dead just as He said
6. If opponents took the body why did they not simply produce it later to dispute the resurrection?
7. Instead they lied about it and told those who had guarded the tomb and witnessed the angels rolling the stone away that “His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept” (Mat.28:13)
8. “The disciples could not have stolen the body because the Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb and had placed the Roman seal on the tomb
9. The empty tomb was an obvious proof of the resurrection” (Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology)

## **II. The Shape of the Linen Wrappings**

1. All the Gospel Writers Record the Appearance of the Linen Wrappings (John 20:5-7; Lk.24:12)
  1. Matthew records the angel saying in Matthew 28:6, “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay”
  2. Mark records this same event in Mark 16:6: “But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him”
  3. Luke’s account is similar to John’s: Luke 24;12 says, “But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened”
  4. Only in John’s account do we find greater detail about the linen cloths and hearing of his belief after seeing them. John 20:8 says, “he saw and believed
  5. He saw the linen wrappings that still retained the shape of the body and the headpiece “not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself” (v.7)

6. John knew no one could have taken the body out of the wrappings and replaced the wrappings to retain the shape of a body
  7. Professor E. H. Day says of John's narrative: "It is characterized throughout by the personal touch, it has all the marks of the evidence not only of an eyewitness, but of a careful observer."
  8. There was only one explanation: the body of Jesus had passed through the linen wrappings
2. John is the Only Writer to Record Joseph and Nicodemus Anointing the Body with 75 Pounds of Spices (John 19:38-40)
1. "The Jewish people didn't embalm their dead; they anointed the body with a heavy load of spices to keep the smell of death from permeating the area until the body was buried. Myrrh was a liquid, and aloes was a powder, and the two were mixed together" (John MacArthur, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ [Study Guide]* p.17)
  2. Alfred Edersheim says, "It was customary in Christ's time to use great quantities of spices for embalming the dead, especially for those held in high esteem."
  3. Michael Green relates the following concerning the burial preparation given Jesus' remains: "The body was placed on a stone ledge, wound tightly in strips of cloth, and covered with spices. St. John's Gospel tells us that some seventy-pounds were used, and that is likely enough. Joseph was a rich man, and no doubt wanted to make up for his cowardliness during the lifetime of Jesus by giving Him a splendid funeral. The amount, though great, has plenty of parallels. Rabbi Gamaliel, a contemporary of Jesus, was buried with eighty pounds of spices when he died."
  4. Josh McDowell, in his book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, asks, "Now supposing we had been present in the sepulcher when the resurrection of Jesus actually took place. What should we have seen? We should suddenly have noticed that the body had disappeared. The body cloths, under the weight of 100 lbs. Of spices, once the support of the body had been removed, would have subsided or collapsed, and would not be lying flat. A gap would have appeared between the body cloths and the head napkin, where His face and neck had been. And the napkin itself, because of the complicated criss-cross pattern of the bandages, might well have retained its concave shape, a



crumpled turban, but with no head inside it.

5. A careful study of the text of John's narrative suggests that it is just these three characteristics of the discarded grave clothes which he saw. First, he saw the cloths 'lying.' The word is repeated twice, and the first time it is place in an emphatic position in the Greek sentence. We might translate, 'He saw, as they were lying (or 'collapsed'), the linen cloths.' Next, the head napkin was 'not...with the linen cloths but...in a place by itself.' This is unlikely to mean that it had been bundled up and tossed into a corner. It lay still on the stone slab, but was separated from the body cloths by a noticeable space. Third, this same napkin was 'not lying...but wrapped together...' This last word has been translated 'twirled.' The Authorized Version 'wrapped together' and the Revised Standard Version 'rolled up' are both unfortunate translations. The word aptly describes the rounded shape which the empty napkin still preserved." (p.221)

### III. The Resurrection Appearances

#### 1. To Mary Magdalene

1. John 20:14-18 - "(14) When she had said this, she turned around and \*saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. (15) Jesus \*said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she \*said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." (16) Jesus \*said to her, "Mary!" She turned and \*said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). (17) Jesus \*said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" (18) Mary Magdalene \*came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her."

2. Mark 16:9 - "Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons"

2. To Women Returning From the Tomb - Matthew 28:9-10 - "And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me"

3. To Peter Later in the Day Lk.24:34 - “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”
4. To The Two Disciples Who Were Traveling to Emmaus (Lk.24:13-35)
5. To the Apostles without Thomas (John 20:19-25)
6. To the Apostles with Thomas Present (John 20:26-29)
7. To Seven of the Eleven Disciples by the Lake of Tiberias (John 21:1-23)
8. To Over 500 Brethren At Once (1 Cor.15:6)
9. To James (1 Cor.15:7)
10. To the Eleven at Once (Mat.28:16-20)
11. At His Ascension (Acts 1:3-12)
12. To Paul (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Cor.15:8)
13. To Stephen (Acts 7:55)
14. To John on the Island of Patmos (Rev.1:10-19)

James Montgomery comments: “Note that when the disciples of Jesus proclaimed the resurrection, they did so as eyewitnesses and they did so while people were still alive who had had contact with the events they spoke of. In 56 A.D. Paul wrote that over 500 people had seen the risen Jesus and that most of them were still alive (1 Cor.15:6ff.). It passes the bounds of credibility that the early Christians could have manufactured such a tale and then preached it among those who might easily have refuted it simply by producing the body of Jesus.”

#### **IV. The Transformed Disciples**

“The disciples knew Christ had died and were skeptical at first concerning His resurrection, but when they saw Him they were completely changed. The Peter of Acts 2 is quite different from the Peter of John 19. Knowledge of the resurrection made the difference” (Ibid., Enns).

1. They Spoke with Boldness

1. Acts 4:13 - "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."
2. Acts 4:18-19 - "So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge."

## 2. They Suffered for What They Believed

1. James was murdered - Acts 12:1-2 - "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword"
2. Peter was put in prison - Acts 12:3-4 - "And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover"
3. John was exiled to the island of Patmos - Rev.1:9 - "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"

## 4. Fox's Book of Martyrs records the following about the disciples:

1. Philip - "Was born at Bethsaida, in Galilee and was first called by the name of "disciple." He labored diligently in Upper Asia, and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified, A.D. 54."
2. Matthew - "Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less. The scene of his labors was Parthia, and Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60."
3. James the Less - "At the age of ninety-four he was beat and stoned by the Jews; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club."
4. Mathias - "Of whom less is known than of most of the other disciples, was elected to fill the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem

and then beheaded.”

5. Andrew - “Was the brother of Peter. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations; but on his arrival at Edessa he was taken and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground. Hence the derivation of the term, St. Andrew's Cross.”
6. Mark - “Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria, at the great solemnity of Serapis their idol, ending his life under their merciless hands.”
7. Bartholomew - “Preached in several countries, and having translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India, he propagated it in that country. He was at length cruelly beaten and then crucified by the impatient idolaters.”

The following description of the change that occurred in the lives of the apostles after the resurrection is an interesting poetic portrayal:

“On the day of the crucifixion they were filled with sadness; on the first day of the week with gladness. As the crucifixion they were hopeless; on the first day of the week their hearts glowed with certainty and hope. When the message of the resurrection first came they were incredulous and hard to be convinced, but once they became assured they never doubted again. What could account for the astonishing change in these men in so short a time? The mere removal of the body from the grave could never have transformed their spirits, and characters. Three days are not enough for a legend to spring up which would so affect them. Time is needed for a process of legendary growth. It is a psychological fact that demands a full explanation.

Think of the character of the witnesses, men and women who gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known, and who even on the testimony of their enemies lived it out in their lives. Think of the psychological absurdity of picturing a little band of defeated cowards cowering in an upper room one day and a few days later transformed into a company that no persecution could silence – and then attempting to attribute this dramatic change to nothing more convincing than a miserable fabrication they were trying to foist upon the world. That simply wouldn't make sense.”

Just as Jesus Christ transformed the lives of His disciples, so men throughout the past 2000 years have also had the same experience.

## **V. The Observance of the First Day of the Week and Establishment of the Church**

The disciples immediately began to meet together in commemoration of Jesus' resurrection

1. Acts 20:7 - "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight"
2. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come"
3. Revelation 1:10 - "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet"

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Do you believe the many infallible proofs of Jesus' resurrection?
2. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-26: "(13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; (14) and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. (15) Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; (17) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. (21) For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, (24) then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death."
3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is our message
4. We are to proclaim it faithfully to a world who thinks the cross is "foolishness"
5. So today is not about Easter rabbits and Easter eggs

6. It's about our Savior rising from the dead
7. No other "religion" reports of their leader rising from the dead
8. Nor does any other leader claim as Jesus did to lay down His life and take it back again
9. Let's pray and prepare our hearts as we share together in the Lord's Table, remembering His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead!