

## #1 Matt. 28:1-15 “The Empty Tomb”

**Matthew 28:1–7 (NLT)** Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. <sup>5</sup> Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. <sup>7</sup> And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.”

This is Matthew’s account; there are additional details in the other Gospel accounts. **Mark 16:1–8**; **Luke 24:1–11**, **John 20:1-18**

What we learn by comparing all four accounts is that ***there was a lot of confusion on Sunday AM around the empty tomb.*** One composite account reads like this: 1 Four or Five women arrive at the tomb, 2 They see the stone is moved, 3 They go inside and see that Jesus' body is not there, 4 The angels talk to them, 5 They split into two groups to tell the disciples, 6 Mary Magdalene runs to tell Peter and John, 7 Peter and John run to the tomb, 8 Mary Magdalene follows them to the tomb, 9 They go into the tomb, 10 They see and believe that's it's empty (but not that Jesus rose), 11 Peter and John go to Bethany, 12 Mary Magdalene weeps at the tomb, 13 The angels talk to her again, 14 Jesus appears to her, 15 She goes to Bethany to tell the disciples she saw Jesus, 16 Meanwhile, Jesus appears to the other women, 17 They arrive in Bethany and tell the disciples they saw Jesus, 18 The disciples don't believe the women, 19 Mary Magdalene arrives in Bethany and tells them she saw Jesus, 20 They don't believe her either. <http://www.northforest.org/Classic/ChristianApologetics/womenattomb.html> and another goo site:

[http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/resurrection\\_accounts.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/resurrection_accounts.htm)

The accounts we have are exactly what you would have when 4 or 5 people see the same event from different “Vantage Point” (s) (Interesting movie). The guards were fearful and confused. The disciples were coming and going at various times; having different reactions and experiences at the empty tomb. Interestingly there is no account of the actual Resurrection itself. No human being was there in the tomb at that moment when Jesus’ came alive and rose from the dead, and so they recorded the events surrounding the discovery of the empty tomb. Let’s look at some of the things the disciples did see and record.

**#2** <sup>1</sup> Now **after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (the mother of James, and Salome, Joanna, bought spices that they might come and anoint Him) came to see the tomb.** <sup>3</sup> And they said among themselves, **“Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?”**

**“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary...”** The women (*were the last at the cross and the first to the tomb and*) were the first witnesses to the resurrection, a fact that seems to guarantee the credibility of the account in a world that usually did not accept women’s testimony as legally binding, so if the was story fabricated, only male witnesses would have been included. **Craig Bloomberg** Like the shepherds who witnessed Jesus’ birth, (1 Co 1:27) God deliberately chooses people the world considers “foolish” in order to **shame** those who think they are wise. (Think about it: if you were one of the disciples thinking about all of this later, wouldn’t you be ashamed of yourself for the way you’ve thought about the “lowliness” and insignificance of women in the past?!)

**#3** <sup>2</sup> And behold, **there was a great earthquake;** for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and

**rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.** <sup>3</sup> His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And **the guards shook for fear of him,** and became like dead *men*.

**“great earthquake”** **“Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?”** Since the stone was very heavy and was rolled downhill to close the tomb – women, even four of them, did not expect to be able to open it up. \*\*The fact that they had brought spices was an act of faith and the Lord honored that and rolled the stone for them to let them in! Though physically weak, they were spiritually strong. And like D.A. Carson says: **“The miraculous removal of the stone was not in order to let Jesus *out* but to let the women *in* to see the empty tomb.”**

**#4** <sup>5</sup> But the angel answered and said to the women, **“Do not be afraid,** for I know that you seek Jesus **of Nazareth** who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> **He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.**

**“Do not be afraid”** This is the same thing they told the shepherds when Jesus was born! **(Luke 2:8–11)** This shows that the disciples were fearful after the cross!

**“as He said”** **#5 Matthew 16:21 (NKJV)** From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day...(17:22–23, 20:18–19)

**#6 Matthew 12:39–40 (NKJV)** But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and

three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

What did they see in the tomb? In John's account he and Peter race to the tomb. **#7 John 20:1–10 (NLT)** Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" <sup>3</sup> Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. **He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.** <sup>8</sup> Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—<sup>9</sup> for **until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.**

Grave robbers? Bruce Barton makes the point that **"A grave robber couldn't possibly have made off with Jesus' body and left the linens as if they were still shaped around it. The best explanation was that Jesus had risen from the dead, just as he said he would."**

**#8** The evidence of the Shroud of Turin suggests that the body of Jesus disappeared from this earth without disturbing the wrappings. **"The Shroud of Turin" By David Sunfellow:**

**"The image on the Shroud is a uniquely three-dimensional (photographic negative). Most scientists believe that the image was made by the body emitting a burst of energy of some kind, they have no idea how this could have been done. (The scientist I heard speak who was on the team who was**

able to view and study the shroud said it was as if every pore in the man's body emitted a laser light for a Nano-second (the twinkling of an eye (less than 1/4's second) and then the body vanished!) Efforts to lightly burn images into shroud-like fabrics have all failed to reproduce the extraordinarily delicate, detailed, three-dimensional effect found on the Shroud. The way the image was burned onto the Shroud is also flawlessly accurate in terms of how a body emitting energy would imprint itself on a cloth that was covering it."

But other than this disputed "evidence", how do we know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? First, we have historical eye witness accounts (the Gospels) of seeing Him alive after that Sunday AM. **#9 Acts 2:32 (NKJV) This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.**

We have the realistic reaction of the disciples to these events in the spreading of the news of the Resurrection and their willingness to die to testify to this event as fact. But none of the eye witnesses lived past 100 AD, so how can we know today – is it just second hand by faith in the events recorded in the NT. NO! There is more:

There is a Person living today who was a witness of the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ and who still lives to testify of that truth. He was there at the cross and there at the tomb. Peter said: **#10 Acts 5:32 We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him."**

The Holy Spirit is the only living witness; and in order for us to be witnesses we must receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Remember what Peter said to those in Jerusalem: **#11 Acts 2:38–39 (NLT) Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn**

to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** <sup>39</sup> **This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God.”**

TO BE WITNESSES, WE MUST HAVE THE WITNESS LIVING IN OUR HEARTS! It is obvious in the history of the church that the Holy Spirit has been in the hearts of believers who have witnessed (Martyr) to the truths of the resurrection even unto death. The Spirit is His gift to us who cry out to Him for salvation; and one of His ministries in our lives is to bear witness to the truth of an empty tomb and Risen Savior.

This fact has incredible implications for you and I as believers, considering it was the power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead! The same Spirit, with the same power, lives in us: **#12 Romans 8:11** **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,** He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

**#13** <sup>7</sup> **And go quickly and tell His disciples —and Peter—** that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” <sup>8</sup> So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

**“go quickly and tell His disciples”** The angel (s) commissioned the women to tell the rest of the disciples about the empty tomb and remind them of what Jesus had said.

**#14** <sup>9</sup> **And as they (The women!!!) went** to tell His disciples, behold, **Jesus met them,** saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus

said to them, “Do not be afraid. **Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.**”

**“Jesus met them”** – Again Jesus met the women – He had an opportunity to talk to Peter and John – but did not appear to them. In fact the men did not even believe the women at first: **#15 Mark 16:10–11 (NLT)** She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. <sup>11</sup> But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, **they didn’t believe her.**

Why was the Gospel placed into the hands of Mary Magdalene and the other women?

One reason was the arrogance of the disciples. Think if one of the disciples who had constantly argued about which one of them was the greatest had been the first. The pride would have destroyed them! This rather humbled and “shamed” them! (Sitting around later...)

Another reason is that the Lord was sending the men a message in a culture where women were 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens. All are one in Christ. Paul said: **#16 Galatians 3:28 (NIV84)** There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Ladies are to be honored as co-heirs of the Gospel.

P.S. Women are generally more desperately aware of their spiritual needs than men, more humble and at times more spiritually tuned. Peter later warned the men to treat God’s daughters with respect, as God had taught him! **#17 1 Peter 3:7 (NASB95)** You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

**#18** <sup>11</sup> Now while they were going, behold, **some of the guard came into the city and reported** to the chief priests all the things that had happened. <sup>12</sup> When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, **#19** <sup>13</sup> saying, “**Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’**” <sup>14</sup> And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” <sup>15</sup> So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

**“reported”** This was their death sentence under Roman law.

**“His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.”** An early attempt at “Tomb-gate”! **#20** Their devised story was a weak one that a critic might easily discredit although, **it was still being circulated in the days of Matthew’s writing this Gospel, and even in the days of Justin Martyr (A.D. 130–160).**

**#21** Why would Jesus’ disciples, who already had run off on him at his arrest, risk a return at night to a guarded and sealed tomb in an effort to steal a body—an offense that could incur the death penalty? If they had done so, would they have taken the time to unwrap the body and leave the grave clothes behind?

**#22** If this had occurred *while* the guards *were asleep*, how could the guards possibly have known that the *disciples came during the night and stole* the body? If this truly happened, why didn’t the religious leaders arrest the disciples in order to prosecute them? **Bruce Barton**

**#23 Story Time:** by William Hendriksen. “Monday morning, presumably the day after the rumor of the stolen body had begun to spread, one of these guards, **let us suppose**, is being stopped by a friend who says to him, “**What is this we hear about the tomb being empty, and the body missing?**”



Answer: What actually happened was that his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were sleeping.” “Oh,” says the inquirer, “then that explains it.” He continues on his way, satisfied that the problem has been solved. He tells all his friends and relatives about it. Many of them also believe the rumor.

However a little farther along this same guard meets someone else, who asks him the same question. He receives the same answer. But this man is not entirely satisfied with it. As in disbelief he stares at the soldier and asks, “Do you really mean to stand there and tell me that all of you twelve men—or whatever was the number—remained asleep when some Galilean fishermen entered the garden, and that while they were busily engaged in removing and turning on its side the heavy slab, entering the tomb, and carrying out the corpse, none of you men even so much as woke up? Some sleepers you must be!”

A third person enters into conversation with the same soldier. His retort is: “What kind of guards are you people, that you actually allowed all this to happen? I have always learned that guards were supposed to stay awake.”

Finally, the real bombshell! This person, after looking at the watchman in sheer unbelief for a long time, says to him, “Would you please repeat that? I don’t know whether I understood you the first time.” So very slowly the soldier repeats, “His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were sleeping.” The man answers, “Do you really want me to believe that? You said that you yourself and all the other men who were supposed to be on guard were sleeping. Well, if you were *sleeping*, then how do you know what happened? If you were sleeping, you didn’t see anybody enter the garden and carry away the body. **You are merely guessing. I, too, will give my solution of the problem of the empty tomb. It is far more reasonable than yours. It is this: the tomb is empty because Jesus arose triumphantly. He is my Savior and my Lord.**”

**Paul said to the Athenians: #24 Acts 17:30–31 (NKJV) Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”**