

7/27/25

**Jesus Fills Empty Lives**  
**Jn. 20:1-23**

Have you ever misunderstood something, thinking that it was the worst thing that could happen to you, when in fact it became the biggest blessing?

Such was the case on Easter Sunday, three days had passed and for many the hope of all their dreams had been shattered as Jesus had been crucified, buried.

\* But out of love and respect some came to the tomb to anoint the body!

Easter Sunday morning was characterized by three things. Jn. 20:1-23

- I. The empty tomb. vs. 1-10
- II. The empty woman. vs. 11-18
- III. The empty disciples. vs. 19-23

**I. The empty tomb. vs. 1**

A. The time of the visitation was on Sunday, “Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark.” vs. 1a-b

- 1. John and the synoptic gospels affirm it was on Sunday, which begins at sunset Saturday to sunset Sunday and Paul confirms it to the Corinthians. 1Cor. 15:1-4, 14-19

- 2. John says, “while it was still dark”, the three synoptic gospels affirm it was early in the morning before dawn, at the time of sunrise. Matt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12
  - 3. The first person to the tomb was a woman, Mary Magdalene, both Matthew and Mark affirm this fact. Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1
  - 4. Mary Magdalene had been delivered by the Lord from seven demon. Lk. 8:2
  - 5. Matthew tells us Mary Magdalene was sitting opposite the tomb as well as the other Mary after Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Jesus up and return after the Sabbath. Matt. 27:61; 28:1
  - 6. Mark and Luke both say Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, and ointment to anoint the body of Jesus. Mk. 16:1; Lk. 23:55-24:1
- B. The first observation of Mary was concerning to her, “and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.” vs. 1c**
- 1. Mary had no idea who or what had happened, in fact she and the other women on their way asked each other who was going to roll away the stone. Mk. 16:1-3
  - 2. But Matthew tells there was a great earthquake when an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone. Matt. 28:2
  - 3. The synoptics in no way contradict each other nor John’s account, rather they are

supplementary and complement each other!  
Matt. 28:1-2; Mk. 16:1-3; Lk. 24:1-3

**C. The response of Mary Magdalene about the empty tumb. vs. 2-4**

1. The natural response of Mary was to go tell the disciples, “Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.” vs. 2a-c
  - a. Peter had denied Jesus three times in the court of the High Priest.
  - b. John is the second disciple, identifying himself again in the third person.
2. The first impression and conclusion of Mary Magdalene was that the body of Jesus had been move or stolen by grave robbers, “and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” vs. 2d-f
  - a. Mary misunderstood the empty tomb without the body of Jesus.
  - b. The pronoun “we” shows that there had been other women with Mary.
3. Peter and John instantly went to the tumb, “Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb.” vs. 3
  - a. Peter had denied the Lord three times and his last time he saw Jesus was as his eye met the eyes of Jesus in his third denial.
  - b. The other disciple is John, the one whom Jesus loved, the one who had been at the

cross, heard Jesus command him to care for His mother and the one who saw Jesus die, from afar off. Jn. 19:26-27

4. Peter and John went running, “So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.” vs. 4
  - a. John was a little faster than Peter.
  - b. It could be that John was a younger man or just that he was faster.

**D. The inspection of the tomb by John and Peter. vs. 5-8**

1. John arrived to the tumb first cautiously, “And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in.” vs. 5
  - a. The phrase stooping down “parakupto” refers to bend down and forwards to examine and carefully scritnize the tomb.
  - b. The words “looking in and saw” is the word “blepo”, which means to see at a glance or a single look.
    - \* The word is used to describe very picturesque picture of the angels who desire to look into the things of the church. 1Pet. 1:12
  - c. John might not have wanted to be ceremonially defiled for the feast of unleaven that was still going on.
2. Peter arrived second to the tumb committed to be the first inside the tomb, “Then Simon

Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.” vs. 6a-c

- a. Peter was not concerned with being defiled and burst into the tomb in his usual impulsive way.
  - b. Peter wanted to see for himself if the body of Jesus was really gone.
3. Peter examined with a critical eye two things. vs. 6d-7
- a. First the wrappings were intact, “and he saw the linen cloths lying there.” vs. 6d
    - 1) The word saw “theoreo” means to view attentively, closely and mentally critical to inspect and consider, a present active tense.
    - 2) The body was not stolen; the linen cloth was still wrapped as if a body was inside.
  - b. Second the face cloth was separated from the linen cloths, “and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.” vs. 7
    - 1) The phrase folded together “entulisso” means undisturbed, twirled, as it had been wrapped around the head.
    - 2) No one had stolen the body of Jesus, Jesus had risen from the dead, but they did not know this at this time!

- 4. John entered in saw and believed, “Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.” vs. 8
  - a. The word for saw “eido” is different from the one in verse 5, 6, it means to know, be aware and sure Jesus had risen.
  - b. The result was that John believed “episteusen” the aorist tense, to indicate a decisive act not a process. vs. 25, 29, 31

**D. The spiritual condition of the disciples. vs. 9-10**

- 1. They did not understand the Scriptures of the Old Testament that Jesus had to be raised from the dead, “For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.” vs. 9
  - a. The understanding of spiritual truth is not a matter of intellectual capacity, but a matter of revelation and faith.
  - b. Both did not perceive nor understand at this point the full meaning of the Scripture about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, though He constantly told them. Ps. 16:9-10; Is. 26:19; 53:10-12
    - 1) There is no contradiction to the statement that John saw and believed in verse nine.
    - 2) A person can believe God’s word without understanding what God promises or declares, that is faith!

- 3) The word from “ek” means out from the dead in a glorified body, not just brought back to life.
- 4) In types of the resurrection like Isaac and Jonah. Gen. 22; Matt. 12:40
- 2. They went home, “Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.” vs. 10
  - a. The word home is in the plural, each his home.
  - b. The disciple John would be going to his home where the mother of Jesus lived.

### **Illustration**

The despair of Mary Magdalene about the empty tomb would be much like going to your bank and finding out your account was empty of your money!

### **Application**

- 1. The apostles had followed Jesus about 3 ½ years and had given up their livelihood of fishing.
  - a. They had been gripped with fear when Jesus told them He was going back to the Father.
  - b. Peter was very bothered by it, frantic.
  - c. Now their greatest fears appeared to be coming true, making them hopeless without the evidence of the resurrected Christ.
- \* Peter says, “has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection.” 1Pet. 1:3b
- 2. Paul the apostle says the following, if in fact Jesus did not rise from the dead. 1Cor. 15:14-19

- a. “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty..” vs. 14
- b. “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.” vs. 15-16
- c. “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” vs. 18
- d. “Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” vs. 19
- e. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” vs. 19

***Easter Sunday was characterized by an empty tomb without the body of Jesus!***

## **II. The empty woman. vs. 11-18**

- A. The bewildered condition of Mary Magdalene. vs. 11
  - 1. The location of Mary Magdalene is given, “But Mary stood outside by the tomb.” vs. 11a
    - a. The word “but” stands in contrast to the two disciples that went home.
    - b. Mary may have arrived after the disciples left, then the other women. Mk. 16:9-11
  - 2. The condition of Mary Magdalene was to be consumed with sorrow, “weeping”. vs. 11a

- a. The word weeping “klaeo” means to mourn or lament sobbing in pain and grief for the death of Jesus.  
\* The present active tense, ongoing!
  - b. Her greatfulness and love for Jesus for having delivered her of seven demons and perhaps remembering some of the words Jesus had spoken to her at special times.
3. The observation of Mary Magdalene, “and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.” vs. 11b
- a. The word stooped down “parakupto” means to incline to look at something with careful inspection.
  - b. With the intent to come to a conclusion about the empty tomb, it is the same word used for John in verse five.
- B.** The inspecting eye of Mary Magdalene saw two angels. vs. 12-13
1. The amazing sight, “And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” vs. 12
- a. The angels were like the two cherubim on the mercy-seat of the ark, where the glory of God would appear on Yom-Kippor to the priest, the Day of Atonment.
  - b. The two angels, one at the head, the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had

- laid, revealing the glory of God, the body of Jesus was not there, it had been raised a glorified coming right through the rappings, but Mary was blind to the fact.  
\* The examination of the other gospels will show angels were seen at different times and different numbers throughout the visit to the tomb.
2. The angels declared a mild rebuke to Mary by asking her a question, “Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” vs. 13a-c  
\* Jesus was alive, Luke records, “Why are you seeking the living among the dead.” Lk. 24:5
3. Mary declared her rational conclusion, “She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” vs. 13d-e
- a. The pronoun “they”, probably refers to the Jews that they had taken Jesus’ body.  
\* Later the chief priest would bribe the soldiers at the tomb to say the disciples had stolen the body, while they were sleeping. Matt. 28:11-15
  - b. She in her love for Jesus just wanted to see and know the place of His body!
- C.** The appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. vs. 14-18
1. The appearance of Jesus was instant. vs. 14

- a. Mary was speaking to the angels at the moment and all of a sudden Jesus appeared, “Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there.” vs. 14a
  - 1) She was not excited about seeing the angels, being insignificant to Jesus!
  - 2) As she turned, Jesus appeared at will many times after His resurrection!
- b. Mary did not recognize Jesus, “and did not know that it was Jesus.” vs. 14b
  - \* But though it was Jesus, she did not recognize Him!
- 2. The conversation of Jesus with Mary Magdalene. vs. 15
  - a. The question of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, “Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” vs. 15a-d
    - 1) The first question was like the angels, “Woman, why are you weeping?”
      - \* Jesus was standing right in front of her, alive!
    - 2) The second question, “Whom are you seeking?”
      - \* Mary was seeking the Incarnate Christ, not the glorified Christ!
  - b. The explanation of John about Mary Magdalene, “She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him.” vs. 15e-g

- 1) She was so consumed with her sorrow that she did not recognize Jesus and thought He was the gardener.
- 2) There is no indication Jesus hindered her from recognizing Him, like the two men on the Road to Emmaus. Lk. 24:16
- c. The response of Mary Magdalene “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” vs. 15h-k
  - 1) The love of Mary for Jesus was so great she told Jesus, thinking he was the gardener, that if he showed her where the body of Jesus was, she would “take Him away” the word “airo” means to lift from the ground and carry with her own hands.
    - \* Fervent love has no limitations; she was willing to carry the body herself, which would have been impossible!
  - 2) Three times she used the personal pronoun “Him” for Jesus in this verse, demonstrating her love for her Lord.
- 3. The revelation of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. vs. 16
  - a. Jesus spoke her name, “Jesus said to her, “Mary!” vs. 16a-b
    - 1) Jesus called out her name in that very distinct way He always addressed her!

- 2) Mary being one of His sheep she recognized His voice. Jn. 10:27
- b. Mary knew it was Jesus, “She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher).” vs. 16c-e
  - 1) What a relief, comfort and joy this must have been to her heart!
  - 2) Jesus had risen out from the dead and was alive!
  - 3) Some commentators make the note that this term was used for God.
- 4. The attempt of Mary Magdalene to hold fast to Jesus. vs. 17
  - a. Jesus gave an imperative command to Mary, “Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me.” vs. 17a-b
    - 1) The KJV says “touch Me not”, giving the impression Jesus was so holy now that He could not be touched, but Jesus was touched by Philip.
    - 2) The phrase “haptomai” means to hold or fasten herself to Him, literally Jesus said, “Cleave not to Me.”
    - 3) Matthew tells us that she clung to His feet and worshipped Him. Matt. 28:9
  - b. The reason was give by Jesus, “for I have not yet ascended to My Father.” vs. 17c
    - 1) The ascension Jesus was referring to seems to have taken place between this account and when Jesus appeared to the ten in the upper room?

- \* To present His blood to the Father in heaven, as our High Priest, being distinct from His ascent in Acts! Acts 1:9-11; Heb. 2:17; 4:14-16
- 2) Jesus would ascend to the Father leading “captivity captive”, those who died in faith to heaven, that is why she was not to cling to Him. Eph. 4:8-10; Col. 2:15; 1Pet. 3:19-20
- c. Jesus gave a second imperative command to Mary Magdalene, “but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ” vs. 17d-f
  - 1) The new relationship was in effect, He was their brother and God was their Father, but Jesus never said “our Father” corporately to the disciples.
  - 2) Jesus affirmed His ascension to the Father between this account and His appearance to the ten in the room.
- 5. The obedeince of Mary Magdalene. vs. 18
  - a. Mary went to the disciples to reveal she had seen Jesus alive, “Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord.” vs. 18a
    - \* She returned with fear and joy, no contradiction by the two. Matt. 28:8
  - b. Mary related all the words of Jesus as a herld of the gospel to the men Jesus had prepared to preach the good news, “and

that He had spoken these things to her.”  
vs. 18b

\* Mary and the other women's words  
 seemed to the disciples as idle tales  
 and did not believe her. Lk. 24:11

### **Illustration**

What emptiness filled the heart of a wife who had been informed her husband has been killed in action, only to be filled with the greatest elation and joy when he arrived days later at her front door alive!

### **Application**

1. Every Christian must seek out Jesus with the passion of Mary Magdalene daily.

- a. To hear the voice of Jesus through His word.
- b. By spending time in prayer, waiting on Jesus.
- c. To be directed in the affairs of life in time of disappointments, difficulties, tragedy or sickness.
- d. As believers we can fall into hopelessness, not because we are not saved, but that our eyes are taken off our Lord and placed on the obstacles.

\* “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” Ps. 42:1-2

2. Every Christian must understand the importance of the fellowship God has provided for us with the Father, the Son and each other that our joy be full.

- a. To serve the Lord.

- b. To serve my family.
- c. To serve other.

\* John says, “that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” 1Jn. 1:3-4

*Easter Sunday was characterized by an empty woman until she saw Jesus!*

### **III. The empty disciples. vs. 19-23**

A. The disciples were locked up in Jerusalem. vs. 19

- 1. The time of the appearance is specified, “Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week.” vs. 19a-c
  - a. The same was the Sunday at evening.
  - b. The parallel passages. Matt. 28:16-20;  
Mk. 16:14-18; Lk. 24:36-49
- 2. The condition of their location, “when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled.” vs. 18d
  - a. The location is not identified, maybe the same upper room of the Passover?
  - b. And the doors were shut to make sure no one could come in.
- 3. The reason they were together is specified also, “for fear of the Jews.” vs. 19e



- a. The word fear “phobos” means to be terrified the Jews come after them.
- b. The disciples of Jesus were His apostles sent out to preach the gospel, probably remembering the prophecy Jesus gave them of the coming persecution.
- 4. The appeared to the ten apostles, “Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” vs. 19f-h
  - a. Suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst, He did not come through the door, we can only imagine their shocking surprise!
  - b. Jesus had a glorified body of a different molecular structure able to go through solid materials, travel distances instantly, yet able to be touched and felt physically.
  - c. Jesus greeted the ten, “Peace be with you”, the peace He had promised them before His arrest and crucifixion. Jn. 14:27
    - 1) This was the Hebrew greeting.
    - 2) The peace that surpasses all understanding to guard their hearts and minds for life situations. Phil. 4:6
- B. The evidence Jesus gave to assure the ten it was He. vs. 20
  - 1. Jesus revealed the scars of His crucifixion, “When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.” vs. 20a-b

- a. The One who had been dead and buried was now standing in front of them alive with the marks John described. Rev. 5
  - 1) They prints represented the payment for sin on the worlds behalf, providing peace with God. Rom. 5:1
  - 2) They represented His love for them and the world.
- b. The scars that Zachariah says the Jew will look upon. Zech. 13:6
- 2. Jesus being present transformed thier attitude altering their circumstances, “Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.” vs. 20c
  - \* The eleven were rejoicing Jesus was alive!
- B. The commisioning of the apostles by Jesus. vs. 21
  - 1. Their commission was as the Father gave Jesus, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”
    - a. The peace of Jesus for preaching the gospel to a hostile and god-hating world, persecution was coming.
    - b. The first word sent “apestaken” means send away or send out indicating delegated authority with an enduring aspect, the perfect tense, just as the Father had sent Jesus, we get our word apostle from it.

- c. The second word sent “pempo” always is used for dispatch under authority, the authority of the One who died for the sins of the world, destroyed Satan who had the power of death, to preach the gospel of grace for sins to be forgiven.  
\* The present tense emphasizes the continuing activity assigned to the apostles!
- 2. The great commission, there are five in the New Testament.
  - a. One is each synoptic gospel. Matt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:14-18; Lk. 24:44-49
  - b. One in John. Jn. 20:19-23
  - c. One in the book of Acts. Acts 1:4-8

**C.** The enablment of the apostles for their commission of the gospel. vs. 22

- 1. The manner of imparting the enablment for ministry was to prepare them for their ministry, “And when He had said this, He breathed on them.” vs. 22a-b
  - a. The act was at the same time of their commission, they were already believers.
    - 1) Jesus said He had chosen the twelve and one was a devil. Jn. 6:70
    - 2) Jesus told them that the eleven were completely clean. Jn. 13:10
    - 3) Jesus said they were clean by the words He had spoken to them. Jn. 15:3

- b. The experience was not merely symbolic and should not be explained away in such manner .
  - 1) The event was a real reception of the Holy Spirit into their lives at this point of their lives.
  - 2) The promise of Pentecost was still to come in order to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 2
  - 3) This breathing was as essential as God breathing into the nostrils of man the breath of life, to make him a living soul. Gen. 2:7
- 2. The imperative command followed, “and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. “ vs. 22c-d
  - a. It is a command not a suggestion.
  - b. It is a real experience at the time as Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would be in them. Jn. 14:17
  - c. Jesus had been glorified already in the resurrection as stated earlier. Jn. 7:37-39
  - d. Pentecost was still to come the “epi” experience receiving power to be witnesses in service of the gospel. Acts 2
  - e. God breathed life into the valley of dry bones, the short-term fulfillment and the nation of Israel was born May 14, 1948, they are back in their land, the

long-term fulfillment will take place at the Millennium. Ezk. 37

- D.** The proclamation of their message of the gospel was to be the forgiveness of sins, what Jesus had accomplished. vs. 23
- 1.** This is the positive affirmative, ‘If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.’ vs. 23a-b
    - a.** When any believer preaches the gospel and a person repents of their sins and asks Jesus to forgive them, you or I have the authority to tell the sinner, who is now a saint their all sins are forgiven.
    - b.** The word forgive and forgiven “aphiemi” means to bid going away or depart.
    - c.** The text is not teaching that we as Christians have the power and authority to forgive the sins of sinners.
    - d.** The Catholic Church uses this text as the authority of the priest to forgive the sins of people, it is completely out of context.
  - 2.** The negative confirmation, “if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” vs. 23c-d
    - a.** The word retain “krateo” means to lay hold upon and hold fast.
    - b.** This means if a person preaches the gospel to a sinner and they do not repent of their sin, you or I have the authority to tell them as a very stern warning that

- their sins are not forgiven, God still holds them responsible for their sins and will perish eternally if they die in their sins.
- c.** The phrase of “forgive and retain” is translated in the KJV “binding and loosening” and are only found two other times and the context is to preach and teach according to the word of God and church discipline on what is allowed or not allowed. Matt. 16:19; 18:18
  - d.** The text is talking about the sufficiency and effectiveness of the atonement for all the sins of mankind by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The good news to be proclaimed that whoever believes the message be the recipient of salvation and if they rejected it they would not be saved. Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2Tim. 2:5
  - e.** The text is teaching the right and authority of every and any person who is born again to confidently and lovingly assure any sinner that based on the repentance of their sins, their sins are forgiven and they are justified in Jesus Christ as a new creature. 2Cor. 5:17
  - 3.** The phrase “binding and Loosening” in the KJV is often used by people to bind Satan, it is completely out of context, nowhere are we taught, encouraged or commanded to “bind Satan”!

- a. For God uses Satan at times, even as He did with Job and if we are binding Satan, then God would be fighting Himself.
- b. We do have authority to cast out demons in the name of Jesus and pray for protection from Satan!

### **Illustration**

The world that we live in is a hopeless mass of humanity due to sin, the consequences of sins, the bondage of drugs, alcohol and sexual perversion, and power over people as rulers, leaving them empty for meaning in life, until they are born again and share the good news to sinners!

### **Application**

1. Too many Christians are like the eleven apostles, hiding in their houses or the church, being complacent or afraid to witness for Jesus.
  - a. The illustration of the church is the many part of a human body that Jesus assigns to each one.
  - b. The equipping is by the word, the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. Rom. 12; 1Cor. 12; Eph. 4
2. The Great Commission is to every believer, not just Pastors and evangelist.
  - a. Every person is to be a fisher of men and women.
  - b. We may not always catch fish, but we are to be fishing.

- \* “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2Tim. 4:5
- 3. Every believer is born into warfare, there are no exceptions.
  - a. If Satan can lure you out to do warfare in your flesh, which is impotent, he will defeat you every time. Matt. 26:41
  - b. If you put on the whole armor of God, you will be victorious. Eph. 6:10-18

***Easter Sunday was characterized by the empty disciples until they were commissioned by Jesus!***

### **Conclusion**

Easter Sunday was characterized by three things.

- I. Easter Sunday was characterized by an empty tomb without the body of Jesus!
- II. Easter Sunday was characterized by an empty woman until she saw Jesus!
- III. Easter Sunday was characterized by the empty disciples until they were commissioned by Jesus!