

# The Empty Tomb

Matt 28:1-6

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

## Introduction:

1. Have you ever heard of a man named Harry Houdini? Many of you have. His claim to fame was that he specialized in spectacular escapes. As a matter of fact, he was said to have laughed at locks and to have sneered at fetters. They said of Harry that he had the flexibility of an eel; he had the lives of a cat. They did all kinds of things to try to incarcerate him. They would seal him in coffins—he would escape. They riveted him into a boiler—he escaped. They sewed him up in canvas bags—he escaped. They locked him in a milk can—he escaped. They sealed him in a beer barrel—he escaped. They put him in a maximum- security prison, and old Harry somehow got out. But then, in October 1926, Old Man Death laid his hands upon Harry Houdini, and put him in a grave; and, he has yet to escape. As a matter of fact, he told his wife, "If there is any way out, I will find it. If there is any way out, I'll make contact with you—and, we'll do it on the anniversary of my death." For 10 years, she kept a

light burning over his portrait. At the end of 10 years, she turned out the light. Death had Harry, and he couldn't escape.

2. Death laid its hands on the Lord Jesus Christ, also.
  - a. And, Death put Jesus in a tomb that was hewn from rock
  - b. And, there was a stone over the mouth of that tomb, and the seal of the Roman government was placed upon that tomb.
  - c. But, on the third day, Jesus Christ rose from the sleep of death.
  - d. He left those grave clothes behind
  - e. And, Jesus Christ passed through the walls of that rock-hewn tomb.
  - f. The stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out—it was rolled away to let the disciples in to see that Jesus had risen.
3. Our faith is different from the other faiths around the world.
  - a. All other religious leaders have died. Mohammed died. Buddha died. Confucius died.
  - b. Every founder of a great world religion has died
  - c. Only one religious leader has risen from the dead.
4. Strip the doctrine of the bodily resurrection from Christianity and our faith would be no more than just another religious system condemning the souls of men to hell.
5. If Jesus is still dead today, then everything He did was in vain and His teachings are simply the ravings of a madman.
6. But Jesus is not dead - The angel said that He rose again.
7. Today let us note the importance of the empty tomb.

## **I. THE EMPTY TOMB IS A HISTORICAL FACT**

1Co 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was

seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

1. Peter saw the risen Christ - then the apostles - then over 500 witnesses saw the risen Christ
2. In the OT, under the law, every word of testimony had to be established by two or three witnesses - Deut 17:6
3. Some of these witnesses were not easily convinced of Christ's resurrection
  - a) *When the women told Peter and John that the Savior had risen from the dead Luke tells us that "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." - 24:11*
  - b) *Peter and John did not believe until they ran and examined the empty tomb for themselves*
  - c) *They saw the grave clothes and the napkin that had covered his face left behind in the grave*
4. The angel verified Jesus' resurrection in Mark 16:6  
6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.
5. Even the enemies of Jesus did not deny His resurrection
  - a) *The chief priests paid the guards who were stationed at the tomb large sums of money to say that the disciple of Jesus came and stole his body while the guards slept*
  - b) *If they were sleeping how did they know what really happened*
6. Jesus is not in the garden; He is not on the cross; He is not in the tomb; He is not on earth. He is in heaven at the right hand of God.

## II. THE EMPTY TOMB PROVED THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Mt 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Mt 20:18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*: and the third day he shall rise again.

1. Not only did our Lord declare that He would rise again the third day, but He also declared he would rise by his own power

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

2. No human could take His life. He died on the cross by His own choice and He rose from the dead by His own choice

Joh 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life...

3. Only God could bring a dead body back to life and if Jesus could raise Himself then He must be deity - He must be God
4. The empty tomb is evidence of the deity of our Lord

### **III. THE EMPTY TOMB VERIFIED THAT HE WAS THE MESSIAH**

Ps 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

1. OT prophecy predicted that the coming Messiah would be crucified
2. His hands and feet would be nailed to the tree
3. Zechariah 12:10 tells us that the returning Messiah had been crucified  
10b ... they shall look upon me whom they have pierced...
4. Every time the priest killed a sacrifice he was picturing the death of the Messiah as the sinner's Substitute.

5. Ps 16:10 predicted the resurrection of the Messiah  
10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
6. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah - Jn 4:25-26  
25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.
7. His resurrection declared Him to be the Son of God, the Messiah
8. A false Messiah could not raise Himself from the dead

#### **IV. THE EMPTY TOMB SHOWS THAT CHRIST'S SACRIFICE WAS ACCEPTED BY THE HEAVENLY FATHER**

1Co 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

1. Jesus died to atone for the sins of His people
2. The death of Christ satisfied God's righteous justice
3. Jesus died the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God
4. An aged saint was asked what gospel she believed and her simple answer was, "God is satisfied with the sufferings and death of His Son, that is the gospel that I believe."
5. 1Cor 15:17 tells us that if Christ didn't rise again then we would still be in our sins
6. The fact that Jesus did rise again tells us that God was satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ for our sins and the resurrection declared that satisfaction

#### **V. THE EMPTY TOMB PROVES THAT ALL TRUE BELIEVERS WILL RISE AS JESUS AROSE**

1Co 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

1. Christ was the firstfruits of them that slept.
2. The firstfruits guaranteed that other fruits would be coming
  - a) *The firstfruits of the harvest were taken to the temple and dedicated to the Lord*
  - b) *After the firstfruits then there would be more to come once the rest of the crop was harvested*
3. Christ's resurrection was the firstfruits and that guaranteed that we would rise again

Joh 14:19b ...because I live, ye shall live also.
4. How comforting this is for those who have departed friends and relatives. They go to the graveyard and stand before those graves. They ask, "Can the dead live again?" As surely as the grave of Christ became an empty tomb so shall the graves of His people become empty tombs.
5. The graves may be on land or in the sea but they are destined to become empty

## **VI. THE EMPTY TOMB CONFIRMS THAT WE HAVE A LIVING ADVOCATE IN HEAVEN WITH THE FATHER IN HEAVEN**

1Jo 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Ro 8:34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

1. A dead man in a tomb could not be our Advocate in heaven
2. Jesus had to rise from the dead in order to ascend to heaven
3. The empty tomb tells us that our Savior has risen and ascended to heaven to be our Advocate
4. We need an Intercessor, a Mediator, and Advocate and Christ rose again so that He could fill those offices

## VII. THE EMPTY TOMB ESTABLISHED A FUTURE JUDGMENT DAY

Ac 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Joh 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

1. Our Lord had to rise from the dead in order to be the Judge of all the earth
2. A dead man on a cross could not be the Judge of all the earth. A dead man in a grave could not be the Judge of all the earth

## VIII. THE EMPTY TOMB ARGUES FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

1Th 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1. Jesus had to arise from death and ascend to heaven so that He could come again someday.
2. If Jesus was still dead and in the grave then He could not come back

for His people at the time of the rapture.

3. But He has risen and He is at the right hand of the Father and one day He will come again

1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

4. Had Christ not risen from the dead then there would be no hope of His return for believers
5. We should be looking for our returning Savior who may appear at any time

## **IX. THE EMPTY TOMB AFFIRMS THAT IS SAFE TO TRUST JESUS FOR SALVATION**

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

1. How could we trust in a Savior who was still in the grave.
2. A dead Savior doesn't make sense.
3. If he couldn't save Himself, then how could He save us
4. But the angel said, "He is not here for he is risen as he said."
5. We have a living Savior. His grave was once occupied but not anymore.
6. He proved that He is a worthy Savior

Conclusion:

1. Christianity depends on the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.
2. It was Easter Sunday morning in 1932 and the Rev. Alfred H. Ackley was getting ready for the service. As he was getting ready he was listening to the radio. The announcer said, “We now join the complete red and blue networks for a special program originating in New York City.” The speaker introduced was a well-known preacher from New York City who was known for his liberal thinking. He greeted his radio audience with the words, “Good morning - it’s Easter! You know, folks, it really doesn’t make any difference to me if Christ be risen or not. As far as I am concerned, His body could be as dust in some Palestinian tomb. The main thing is His truth goes marching on!”

Ackley started shouting, “It’s a lie!” His wife came in and asked, “Why are you shouting so early in the morning?” Ackley replied, “Didn’t you hear what that good-for-nothing preacher said? He said it didn’t matter whether Jesus be risen or not!” That day in both services, Ackley shot with barrels, blasting what the preacher said and proclaiming that He was alive. When he got home he was still fuming. His wife said to him, “Why don’t you write a song about it and then maybe you’ll feel better. Then you will have something that will go on telling the story.”

He went to his study and once again turned to the resurrection story as found in Mark 16:6 and reread the words, “He is risen; He is not here.” Joy flooded his heart as he thought of the reality of a living Christ. He picked up his pen and wrote:

I serve a risen Saviour,  
He’s in the world today;  
I know that He is living,  
Whatever men may say;  
I see His hand of mercy,  
I hear His voice of cheer,

And just the time I need Him,  
He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives?  
He lives within my heart.

3. If Christ is not risen then there is no resurrection of the dead and our preaching is vain and our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins.
4. If the grave in the garden in Palestine is not empty then we are the biggest fools this side of hell.
5. But if Christ rose from the dead, then He is the Savior of all who come to him in faith.
6. Trust Him as Savior.