

THE DISCOVERY OF JESUS' EMPTY TOMB

LUKE 24:01–12

Introduction

The tomb was empty. Discovering the empty tomb was the greatest discovery in human history. However, the great tragedy is that most people either are not aware that Jesus arose or do not believe that He arose. Every man has to discover the fact for himself. The empty tomb and the risen Lord have to become a personal discovery for every man.

- I. The first day of the week (v. 1).
- II. The first witnesses of the resurrection (v. 1).
- III. The great stone rolled away (v. 2).
- IV. The body's missing from the tomb (v. 3).
- V. The two angels and their unbelievable message (vv. 4-8).
- VI. The immediate unbelief of the apostles (vv. 9-11).
- VII. The continued unbelief of Peter (v. 12).

I. *Luke 24:01 Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

The first day of the week, Sunday, was the day upon which Jesus arose, the day after the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). Note three facts.

1. Luke clearly spells out when Jesus arose: "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning." Jesus arose before dawn, before the sun arose on Sunday morning. This was significant to the early Christian believers, so significant that they broke away from the common day for worship during the week, the Sabbath or Saturday. They began to worship on Sunday, the day of the resurrection of their Lord (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).
 2. Jesus arose on the first day of the week, on Sunday morning. This means that He had been in the grave for three days just as He had said (Mt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mk. 9:31; 10:34; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46). His resurrection from the dead was a triumph, a conquest over death. Death reigns no more — its rule has been broken (1 Cor. 15:55-56; 2 Cor. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:9, 14-15).
 3. Again, Jesus arose on the first day of the week, Sunday morning. He was in the grave on the Sabbath, unable to observe the laws governing the great season of the Passover and the Sabbath. He was dead; therefore, the law and its observances had no authority over Him. This is symbolic of the *identification* believers gain in Christ. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, God identifies the man with Christ, in particular with the death of Christ. God counts the man as having died with Christ. Very simply, *in Christ's death* believers become dead to the law. (See *Redemption, Law and Jesus Christ*, Rom. 7:4).
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ROMANS 07: 04
REDEMPTION: THE LAW AND JESUS CHRIST

*So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. **Romans 07:04***

The first position of the law is a glorious truth — the law is dead to “brothers” (believers). Note: Scripture says that believers have “died to the law.”

=> Believers have “died to the law;” therefore the law is bound to be dead and inactive to believers.

The law has no jurisdiction, power, rule, authority, or dominion over the true believer. The law is a dead issue to the believer; it has nothing to do with the believer. The believer is dead to the law and the law is dead to the believer. The law simply does not exist for the believer. This is a shock to most people, but it is exactly what Scripture is declaring. The believer is no longer under the law and its accusing finger, no longer under its...

- guilt and shame
- discouragement and frustration
- sense of failure and unworthiness
- condemnation and punishment
- tension and pressure
- sense of disappointment

1. Note how the glorious truth becomes a reality in the life of a person. The believer is dead to the law by the (crucified) body of Christ. The believer is slain or put to death *in Christ*. The law has nothing to say to a dead man. The believer's death in Christ is a *vicarious death*: he does not literally die himself, but he participates in the death of Christ — *spiritually*. When a man believes in Christ's death, God takes that man's belief and counts him as having died in Christ. That is, God counts the death of Christ *for* the death of the believer; God considers the believer to have been in Christ when Christ died. Why does God do this? Because Christ died on man's behalf, in man's stead, taking the penalty and punishment of the law upon Himself. Therefore, the believer — being dead in Christ — is freed from the law, from its demands and guilt and punishment.

The believer is freed “through the body of Christ,” that is, by His slain body or by His death. Christ redeemed the believer from the law...

- by being a curse.

Gal 3:10, 13 *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*

- by His blood.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

- by His flesh.

Eph 2:15 By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

- by the cross.

Eph 2:16 And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

- by His physical body.

Col 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

These are equivalent expressions. They teach the same truth: Christ bore our sins in His own body upon the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). His sufferings satisfied justice. His death makes us acceptable to God and delivers us from the penalty of the law; therefore the believer is free from the law.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

2. Note the glorious purpose for the believer's death to the law.
 - a. The believer dies to the law so that he can be united to Christ, the risen and living Lord. Note the picture of marriage is used again. Before coming to Christ, the believer was married and united to the law; he was under its rule and authority. But now, since coming to Christ, he is married and united to Christ: he is under His rule and authority. The believer no longer lives as the law says, but as Christ lived and commanded. (Note: Christ came to fulfil the law; therefore He and His commandments include not only the law, but much more. Note that believers are married to Christ, the risen and living Lord. The marriage is not a dead or an inactive marriage, but a living, active marriage.

1 Cor 6:15 *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!*

Rom 7:4 *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.*

2 Cor 11:2 *I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.*

1 John 2:24 *See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.*

Eph 5:30 *For we are members of his body.*

- b. The believer dies to the law so that he can bring forth fruit unto God. Bearing fruit would mean...
- To bear righteousness (Rom. 6:21-23; Phil. 1:11).
 - To bear converts (Rom. 1:13; Jn. 15:16).
 - To bear Christian character, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 1:10). □

II. ***Luke 24:01 The First Witnesses of the Resurrection***

The first witnesses of resurrection provide strong evidence of the resurrection.

1. They were actual witnesses of Jesus' *death and burial*. They knew He was dead, and they knew where He had been laid. They had followed along behind the procession to the tomb (Mt. 15:40-41, 47; see Mt. 27:55-56, 61; Lk. 23:55-56). There was no question whatsoever in their mind about His being dead and buried.
2. They had purchased spices and had *come to anoint* Jesus' body. Apparently they had bought the spices Saturday evening after 6 p.m. when the Sabbath ended. Note: they arose "very early in the morning, the first day of the week [Sunday]" to go and embalm Him. Again, they knew He was dead, and they cared; so they wanted to take care of His body just as loved ones care for the bodies of their deceased.
3. They were religionists who *strictly obeyed the law*. They were strict in the observance of the Sabbath. Imagine — their loved one was dead, yet they would not break the Sabbath law even to take care of Him (see Lk. 23:56). The women were obedient to the commandments of God. They were *moral and truthful* and would never think, much less consider, lying about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

III. *Luke 24:02 The Rolled Away Stone*

There was the great stone rolled away from the entrance (See *Stone*, Mt. 27:65-66). The rolled away stone perplexed the women (v. 4). However, the stone had not been rolled back for the benefit of Jesus, but for the witnesses to the resurrection. When Jesus arose, He was in His resurrection body, the heavenly body of the spiritual dimension; and the spiritual dimension has no physical bounds. But the witnesses needed to enter the tomb and see the truth.

MATHEW 27:65–66 JESUS' TOMB

Cave tombs were closed by rolling a huge cartwheel-like stone in front of the entrance. They were almost impossible to remove. A deep slanting groove was hewn out of the rock at the base of the entrance for the circular stone to rest in. The stone usually weighed several tons. Such precautions were essential because there were so many tombs ransacked in those days of poverty.

The tomb was further secured by being sealed. When it was necessary to seal a tomb, the huge stone was cemented to the entrance walls or else some type of rope or binding was wrapped around the entrance stone and fastened to both sides of the tomb. Then the binding was cemented with a hardening clay or wax-like substance. In the case of some burials, usually political figures, the seal of the Emperor was also attached to the walls of the entrance. This was to strike fear of Roman retaliation against any intruder.

In the case of Jesus' tomb, further precautions were taken by placing a patrol to guard against any foul play. This guard consisted of a large number of men (Mt. 28:4, 11f). □

IV. *Luke 24:03 The Missing Body of Jesus Christ*

There was the body's missing from the tomb. The account is simple, yet striking: "when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." They saw, contemplated that Jesus was not there (Mk. 16:6). They saw the slab upon which He had been laid, and *He was not there*.

Rom 4:21 *Being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

2 Cor 1:20 *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

2 Tim 2:13 *If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

V. *Luke 24:04–08 The Message of the Angels*

There were the two angels and their message. Note four significant points about the angels.

1. The angels were radiant, dazzling figures. Their clothes shone (Mt. 28:3) ...
 - “like lightning” (visible, quick, startling, striking, frightening, brilliant).
 - “white as snow” (pure, glistening).

Note the women feared and fell down, bowing in reverence.

2. The angels asked a pointed question: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” There was a rebuke in the question. They were seeking to honour a dead Saviour, a Saviour who was as all other men are, frail and powerless to do anything about life and eternity. Their whole being — their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour — were focused upon a dead Saviour.

They were living just as the world lives — “foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

3. The angels proclaimed the glorious news: “He is not here, but he has risen.” Note two points.
 - a. “He is not here:” the women could see and did see the fact. The fact was clearly evident: Jesus was not in the tomb. He had been there, for the women had seen Him put there. They had witnessed His death and burial, but He was no longer in the tomb (Lk. 23:55-56).
 - b. “He has risen.” Startling, unbelievable words...
 - yet, heaven “declares Him to be living” (Heb. 7:8).
 - yet, Scripture witnesses that He arose (Rom. 1:4; Eph. 1:19-20).
 - yet, He had foretold that He would arise (Lk. 9:22; 13:32; 17:25; 18:31-34).

Rom 1:4 *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Eph 1:19-20 *And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

4. The angels reminded the women that Jesus had foretold His death and resurrection (Lk. 18:31-34). Note the words, “Then they remembered His words.” The followers of Jesus had always been confused about the prophecy of His death and resurrection. They *would not* accept his words literally, refusing to take His predictions at face value. They symbolized His statements; therefore, they never understood His death and resurrection (Lk. 18:34).

But note what happened now. They knew they had been wrong. Conviction struck them, and they became the very first witnesses to the resurrection.

Mat 19:26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Luke 1:37 “For nothing is impossible with God.”

1 Cor 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

2 Tim 2:13 If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

VI. *Luke 24:09–11 Unbelief of the Disciples*

The immediate unbelief of the disciples. The women rushed to the disciples to share the glorious news. But the news seemed to them as like nonsense (hos leros): idle tales, ridiculous talk, wild imagination. “They did not believe the women.” The Greek word is *disbelieved* (epistoun) and is in the imperfect active tense which means they “*kept on disbelieving*,” kept on putting no trust or confidence in what the women were claiming. They were *gripped* with a skeptical, unbelieving spirit.

Thought 1. The disciples were without excuse. Christ had spent month after month drilling His death and resurrection into His disciples. (See Mt. 16:21-28; 17:1-13; 17:22; 17:24-27.)

Mark 16:14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

John 3:18 “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Heb 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Heb 4:11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

VII. *Luke 24:12 Peter’s Unbelief*

The continued unbelief of Peter. Peter’s heart was still drawn to the Lord despite his enormous failure. Hearing that the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb, he rushed to the tomb with his thoughts flying, wondering what had happened to the Lord.

Note a crucial point. Peter stooped down and saw the evidence: the linen clothes were lying off to the side by themselves. However, Peter did not grasp the significance of the evidence. John said he had rushed to the tomb with Peter and did believe, based upon the evidence of the linen clothes. He also verifies that Peter did not grasp the significance at this point. Peter just “went away,” wondering within himself what had really happened.

Thought 1. It is dangerous not to understand the Lord’s Word, not to take His Word at face value. Spiritualizing His words, unless the words are clearly symbolic, often leads to serious unbelief and problems.

Thought 2. A person has to be open to the evidence of the resurrection. The tomb is empty; He is risen – and the honest and seeking man will be convinced by the Spirit of God. What is needed is to do as Peter did: run to the tomb to see what really did happen.

Luke 24:25 *He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”*

Mark 4:40 *He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”* ■