

Outside the Empty Tomb

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[0 : 00] Would you open up your Bibles to Mark chapter 16, verses 1-8.

It's on page 1014 of your pew Bible.! I can still remember driving our red 1991 Honda Civic 4-door from Riverside Hospital to our apartment on Doris Avenue.

My young bride, Jenny, sitting shotgun. And in the back, strapped into our car seat, was our firstborn, Abby. All seven pounds of her.

We were driving home from the hospital where she had just been delivered. We safely arrived at our apartment, carried her into our living room, set her down before our couch.

Jenny and I sat on the couch. We were looking at this seven-pound little girl, and we were in stunned silence. Because we were experiencing a number of emotions.

[1 : 23] Fear. Oh, Lord, help us not mess this thing up. Trembling. A little shaking. A little astonishment. Can you believe she's ours?

Joy. Mixed with wonder. But in that stunned silence, we had both drawn the same conclusion. Our lives have been dramatically changed.

There's no going back. The Gospel of Mark ends with three women outside of an empty tomb, seized by fear and astonishment.

They were trembling. They were literally shaking, stunned silence. They weren't saying a word to anyone. I mean, this is how the Gospel of Mark closes. There's some debate on where it closes, but I think this is the best place.

The question is, what happened? Why were they sitting outside the tomb in stunned silence? I mean, these three women had been following Jesus for at least two to three years, giving of themselves, sharing meals, seeing His miracles take place, listening to His teaching.

[2 : 41] What are they doing outside the tomb in stunned silence? Well, here we are 2,000 years after this event.

And we too are standing outside the empty tomb. We too need to make sense of this empty tomb. Maybe you came into this building this morning, and you're... You're thinking, you know what? I don't know about this resurrection thing because dead people stay dead.

It's how things roll. You subscribe to a naturalistic explanation of reality. I'm glad you're here. Or maybe you've come into this building, and you're like, I don't really have anything against Jesus. In fact, I do think that He died and was raised. But you know what? I really don't want to give up these things that I like doing that God doesn't want me doing.

[3 : 52] I don't really want to give those up. I'm glad you're here too. Maybe you're a Christian here, and you've been living in hiding. You've been isolating.

You have kind of been avoiding other Christians because either something bad has happened with the church, or you're ashamed of yourself for something you're involved with.

I'm glad that you're here. And if you're a Christian who's been running hard, I'm glad you're here too. You see, at the end of Mark 16, 16, 1 through 8, there is this extraordinary claim.

It's a heavenly announcement. It's just three words. He is risen. And it changes everything.

So let me read this account. And there are three scenes I want you to be looking for. Scene one is these three women approaching the tomb. Scene two are these three women in the tomb.

[5 : 00] And scene three are these three women outside of the tomb. So listen as I read. When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might anoint him, go and anoint him.

And very early on, the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb. And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away.

It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, do not be alarmed. You see Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him?

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them.

[6:11] And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. How do you make sense of this empty tomb?

Well, let's look at this first scene. These three women approaching the tomb in verses one through four. So these three women are walking to the tomb.

And this is the tomb in which Jesus' dead body has been laid three days earlier. So this is the third day since he had been crucified, dead, and buried.

So who are these three women? Well, we're told their names. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. And what you need to know about them is that they're not new to this whole account.

If you look back at chapter 15, and you look at verses 40 and 41, we read this. Now this is just moments after Jesus has breathed his last. The centurion has observed this and has said, Surely, truly, this was the Son of God.

[7:14] And we read in verse 40, There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger, and of Joseph, and Salome.

And what we also learn in verse 41 is, When he was in Galilee, these women followed him and ministered to him. And there were also many other women who came up with him in Jerusalem. So these three women were followers of Jesus. For the last two to three years, they had been making meals for him. They had been helping him out financially.

They had been listening to his teaching. They had been watching him perform miracles. They had shared a lot of life with him. But they've also seen him crucified.

And two of the three had now seen where he was buried. In the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Mary, the mother of James, is also the Mary of Joseph.

[8:11] She's actually the mother of Jesus. It's that Mary. Maybe you know her as the Virgin Mary. James and Joseph, well, those are Jesus' half-brothers.

Born of Mary and Joseph. Of a different father than Jesus. She had been a follower of Jesus herself.

Notice when this happens. We see who, now look at when. In verse 16, 1. When the Sabbath was passed. Now remember, in the Jewish mind, the Sabbath was the last day of the week.

And it was on Saturday. So what has happened is, Friday and Saturday has passed. And now it's the first day of the week.

Which is Sunday. And it was at sunrise. Have you heard of a sunrise Easter service? This is why there are sunrise Easter service. At sunrise.

[9:09] So it was the first day of the week on the Sabbath has passed. It is daybreak. And what I just want you to notice here is, Mark seems to be very interested in helping you know what day it is.

He wants to make you sure, make sure you know, this isn't Friday the day that Jesus was crucified, nor is it Sabbath the Saturday, but this is the first day of the week. This is Sunday.

Now we've got to ask the question, why does he want us to know that? In verse 1, we see what these women have come to do.

They went to the tomb to anoint him with these spices. It's just part of the practice of Jewish burial rites back in the first century of preparing a body.

They weren't able to fully prepare the body on Friday because technically the Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday. And so they had to wait. And so they have come in order to finish preparing the body.

[10:25] Now this gets at the state of mind that these three women are in. What are they expecting? They're expecting to find the corpse of Jesus Christ. They're expecting to find his body.

They're going to the tomb to finish burial rites. So that goes to the state of mind that they were in.

They were heading out to the tomb on early that Sunday morning expecting to find the one that they

watched die and then they watched where his body was laid.

And mind you, they also saw this massive stone rolled in front of the entrance of the tomb.

Speaking of which, this tomb was the tomb of a guy named Joseph of Arimathea.

If you look up in chapter 15, verse 43, we see a little bit more about who this guy is. Joseph of Arimathea, respected member of the council.

That's the Sanhedrin, which means he had some influence in Jerusalem, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God. That means he's a follower of Jesus.

[11 : 36] He took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned that the centurion, that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

And Joseph bought a linen shroud and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the rock.

This Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man, a follower of Jesus. And upon Jesus' death, he has Jesus' body taken down, wrapped it in a shroud, and then placed in his own tomb.

This actually fulfills Isaiah 53, 9. There was no question that Jesus was actually dead. In fact, if you were listening, Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so quickly.

So he summons the centurion, most likely the centurion that had just announced, confessed, truly this was the son of God. And that centurion confirms that, in fact, he was dead.

[12 : 42] So they're going to a tomb that they know where it's at. And they're looking for Jesus' dead body to finish preparing it for burial. Now, let's just ask the question, why are they going there?

Well, we've already talked about it. They're going to anoint his body. But there's another reason why. They loved him. These three women loved this man.

They were grieving him. His death must have been an incredible shock. I'm guessing that they were in a state of just kind of that emotional numbness, where you're like, is this really happening?

They're going about their duty because they love him. In verses three and four, as they are approaching the tomb, they remember something.

They remember that stone that had been rolled in front of the entrance of the tomb. It was to keep out robbers and vermin. And then they start asking themselves the question, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

[13 : 54] Verse three. How are you going to get in? How are we going to finish preparing his body for burial? And then as they look up after asking the question, they behold something.

The massive stone had already been rolled away. The tomb had been opened. Now, I'm guessing at this point, if these three women had heart monitors on them, maybe a smart watch, I think at this point, they would have been like, something's not, something's strange.

Their heart rate would have started going up. I'm guessing they're asking this question. Who got here before us? Who opened up his tomb? What were they going to do?

And so what we have here in this first scene is these three women approaching the tomb and they are expecting to find a corpse, the dead body of Jesus.

Scene two is in verses five through seven. And this scene takes place inside the tomb. These three women enter the tomb in verse five and it would have been this hollowed out chamber.

[15 : 20] Most likely, they would have to step down into this chamber. And again, what were they expecting to find? The body of Jesus. And so when they don't find the body of Jesus, they are surprised to find a young man.

A young man wearing white robes which are reflective of holiness and purity. These white robes reflect where this young man hails from.

This young man is an angel. And when these women come in, this young man is sitting off to the right of the platform where Jesus' body had been laid.

And in verse five, you have one of the greatest understatement in the gospel of Mark, maybe in the New Testament. Let me just read it for you. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed.

That is an understatement. Because if you were with those three women who had just gone into the tomb expecting to find the dead body of Jesus but find this young man in white with Jesus' body not there, you're going to be a little more than just kind of alarmed.

[16:47] I'm guessing you're going to be freaking out a little bit. So that heart monitor, that smart watch, their heartbeat just spiked. Did we come to the wrong tomb?

Who's this guy? Where's the body of Jesus? What's interesting is that these three women are in the tomb emptied of the body of Jesus and it hasn't yet dawned on them what has really happened. Could you imagine where their heart rates are? In verse 6, the angel speaks among other things, angels are messengers of God.

They deliver heavenly news from God and look what he says. He says, don't be afraid. In other words, I don't know if this is really true but this is where my mind goes.

There is a reasonable explanation for all of this. Don't be alarmed. And he goes on to say, Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, you got the right tomb.

[18:13] This Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, this angel knew of Jesus' crucifixion and all of heavenly host knew that Jesus had been crucified and that he had died and they knew where he was buried.

They were at the right tomb. He's like this Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified who you seek. I know why you're here. They're there to finish anointing the body of a crucified and dead Jesus. And then comes the heavenly explanation. This is the explanation from heaven, from a messenger of God of what has happened and why there is no body of Jesus.

It's just three words. He has risen. He has risen. He's been raised from the dead. He is alive. He's overcome death. This is a miracle. This is God's doing. And then comes another understatement. See? See?

[19:32] Look at the place where they laid him. It's God he's not there. See? He is risen. You know, in Luke's account of this, the angel says, why do you seek the living among the dead?

this angel has just announced the heavenly reason for the empty tomb. He is risen.

He is alive. He's been brought back from the dead to life. Verse 7, the angel is not done speaking. He's got some kind of instructions for these three women. He goes on to tell them, go tell the disciples, especially Peter. Tell them that Jesus has gone before them to Galilee.

There you will see him. Now, why that's important is all the disciples have abandoned Jesus and especially Peter. Be sure to tell them that Jesus has gone before them.

[20:45] And then he says, just as he told you. I think this is the moment where these women with racing hearts, I think this is the moment where their circuits start to pop.

They're just like, there's just so much going on here. Just as he told you. I was thinking about this. It's like, how did the angel say that?

Did he was like, okay, he's gone before you to Galilee. There you'll see him just as he told you. Or was it like, just as he told you.

Wink, wink. he's referring to a passage in Mark chapter 14. In verse 26, Jesus has just instituted the Lord's Supper.

Verse 26, they go out into the Mount of Olives after they've sung a hymn. And verse 27, Jesus said to them, you will all fall away for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

[21:49] But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. That's what the angel is referencing. Just as he told you.

Remember after the supper? Just as he told you. That he would be raised up and that he would go before you to Galilee. In that, verses 26 through 30 in chapter 14, Jesus makes a number of statements that come to pass.

In verse 27, he tells his disciples that they're all going to fall away from him. And in verse 50 of chapter 14, they all fall away from him. In verses 29 through 30, Peter's like, no, I'll never fall away from you.

And Jesus is like, oh yeah, you will. In fact, you'll fall away three times. You'll deny me three times. And that happens in verses 66 through 72. And in the midst of all this abandoning and denial of Jesus, here is Jesus saying, but I'll be raised up and I'll go before you to Galilee.

There's a plan unfolding here. And I just want you to notice that what Jesus has said about his own death and resurrection has now come to pass.

[23:12] He has risen. Three times earlier in the gospel of Mark, Jesus proclaims his own death and resurrection.

In chapter 8, verse 31. In chapter 9, verses 30 through 32. In chapter 10, verses 33 through 34. Jesus has been repeatedly telling his disciples that he would be handed over, that he would be killed.

Then on the third day, he would be raised from the dead. And that is why Mark is very interested in you knowing what day it is.

It's the third day. And Jesus is no longer in the tomb. And this angel is making a heavenly announcement.

He has risen. So if you're putting it all together, in the gospel of Mark alone, Jesus prophesies of his own resurrection four times.

[24 : 16] And it comes true. And I think this is what finally blows the circuits for these three ladies. Their heart rate goes off the charts.

Inside the tomb, these three women, they're hearing a heavenly explanation of why their dead Lord is not there.

He has risen. And it's all according to plan. Which now brings us to the third scene in verse 8.

Outside the tomb. So these women are completely overwhelmed. as I think you would be. As I know I would be. Their expectations have been totally upended.

They were expecting to find a dead body and they find nobody an angel. We read here that they've been seized by trembling and astonishment which means they're literally shaking and overwhelmed.

[25 : 28] And Mark closes his gospel with these words for they were afraid. That's really interesting. The kind of language being used here describing these three women fear trembling astonishment is used throughout the Bible when people experience a God event.

They either come into the presence of God or they experience one of God's messengers one of his angels. We see this with Joshua we see it take place with Isaiah and Ezekiel Daniel John the disciple who wrote the book of Revelation in Revelation 1 there's this incredible vision of Jesus and John literally falls down before the risen reigning and radiant Christ as a dead man.

And just to be truth in advertising just later in the book of Revelation John the disciple falls down before angels in two places chapter 19 and 22 and he starts to worship them and the angels is like no no no don't worship me worship God.

My point though is when you come into the presence of God or one of his angels it's overwhelming. Peter when he saw Jesus transfigured do you remember he started speaking just nonsense just blabbering because he's so overwhelmed by the glory of Jesus.

So these three women are so overwhelmed in the tomb their circuits are cooked their heart beats through the roof everything that they're hearing is like this can't be true but it is true he said all this and so they start like I gotta get out of here I gotta catch my breath I don't know if they're hyperventilating or not I'm not sure if they're asking for paper bags we can breathe into them and catch our breath collect our minds but they run out of the tomb the resurrection of Jesus Christ should overwhelm you not only are we talking about this defiance of a naturalistic explanation of how things happened I mean dead people are supposed to say dead what's going on here is that we're learning that

[28 : 11] Christ's death and resurrection this isn't some kind of freak accident or random event this is all according to plan God's plan God's plan to save sinners did you notice that these three women were eyewitnesses to Christ's crucifixion two of the three were eyewitnesses to the place where he was buried and all three were now eyewitnesses to the empty tomb they were the first to hear that Jesus has been raised he has risen they're the first and now they're in stunned silence coming out of the tomb speechless dumbstruck they say nothing to anyone these three women stunned silent collecting themselves outside of the tomb maybe they're doing controlled breathing they all come to the same conclusion

Jesus is alive his resurrection dramatically changes everything there's no going back there's no putting Jesus back in the tomb they were silent but they certainly did not remain silent the other gospels show us that they did exactly what this angel told them to do they went and told the other disciples which makes them these three women the first humans to announce the good news that not only Jesus died but that he has risen from the dead it's extraordinary three scenes these three women approaching the tomb these three women inside the tomb and these three women outside the tomb and they're all making one point he has risen he has risen heaven's exclamation explanation for the empty tomb he is risen

Jesus is alive it changes everything no going back we are all outside of the tomb 2000 years outside of the tomb but if this is true that means Jesus is alive today how are you going to make sense of this empty tomb maybe you see the death and resurrection of Jesus and you're like I'm not sure what to think about it well first of all you need to realize that the whole Christian faith is based upon Christ's death and resurrection as a historic reality that it actually happened it's not a pipe dream and because of that this is the claim of it Christ's Jesus's death paid all of the sin all of God for all of God's wrath for all of our sin it's if you're here on Friday it's the tearing of the curtain from top to bottom he made a way through his death into

God's presence and this fact that he is risen means that he has conquered both sin and the grave there's a song called crown him with many crowns listen to this verse crown him the Lord of life who triumphed over the grave and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save his glories now we sing who died and rose on high who died eternal life to bring and lives that death may die the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's power for sinners to have their sins forgiven and then to overcome the power of sin and have hope in the face of death it is an extraordinary event so when you believe in

Jesus you believe that he's God in the flesh that he died on the cross that he was raised from the dead what you're saying is I have been united to Christ in his death and resurrection and so all of his death benefits are applied to me all of my sin has been paid for by Christ and his resurrection now means I have power to say no to sin and now because Jesus has been raised from the dead I can be confident that I will be raised from the dead death doesn't have the final say once you believe that Jesus is God in the flesh who died and was raised for you you start thinking like this he was risen then he's alive today it changes everything now there's no going back we live for Christ that's that's the response this is this is so amazing so how are you making sense of the empty tomb maybe you came in thinking dead people stay dead if if Jesus was raised from the dead you're thinking then well that defies a naturalistic explanation doesn't really make sense and you are right the resurrection cannot be explained naturalistically because it is supernatural that's the

[34 : 46] Christian claim he has risen maybe you came into the room thinking I don't I don't want to change I've heard this old old story many a time Jesus died and was raised I think it's true but you know I don't want to submit my life to him I just want to keep on living for what I'm living for do you realize what you're choosing you're choosing temporary empty pleasures distractions disobedience over the eternal joy of having a relationship with the living God that's what you're choosing one of the things that people don't hear from Christians is the joy of being a follower of Jesus I would never go back to what I was before never never now I experience the joy daily of knowing my Lord and knowing he knows me if you are choosing sin over

Christ beware you're actually choosing God's wrath and it's all because you don't want to give up your sin under this false pretense that your sin is better than following Jesus it's not maybe you're in the room and there was a moment where you professed faith in Jesus Christ and you started following him but you're just miserable now and you're miserable because you've been hiding out you've been hiding because of either sin in your life or you've been deeply hurt by other Christians so you've been avoiding other Christians you might even be bored with Jesus well I just want to remind you that if you genuinely believed in Jesus that means you've been united to Christ in his death and resurrection he has risen and because he has risen it means that these things that you've allowed into your life or these things that have deeply wounded you they are they can be overcome by the power of the resurrection by the power of God's grace sin does not need to have a hold on you

Christian you can experience joy and I call it the joy of integrity the joy of integrity is this when your public profession of faith in Jesus overlaps fully with your private life when there is that kind of overlap there is integrity unity and joy but when there is a gap between one's profession and one's practice it is disintegrity disintegrated and that is a very difficult place to live it makes Christians miserable he has risen turn your heart back to the Savior and if you've been running hard for Jesus you've been sacrificing you've been suffering he is risen your labor is not in vain press on he is risen he is alive it changes everything there's no going back live for him in closing

I just want to help you think about something all of Christianity rises or falls on the historic bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ I mean that's the point of Mark 16 1-6 he has risen if Jesus was not raised he's dead his own words proved false his death accomplished nothing no saving benefits his promise of eternal life is actually void now he was a false savior and if that's the case I'll be first in

line to say Christianity is a waste of time kick it to the curb but if Jesus was raised from the dead he's alive his words proved true his death really paid for our sins his resurrection is the hope of our resurrection he's the one true savior of the world and that means

Jesus is worth your life today on this Easter Sunday I want to compel you to make a decision to choose to decide make a decision and live in light of it with God's help either Jesus was raised from the dead or he was not choose give yourself to it he's risen he's alive it changes everything there's no going back so we live for Jesus in the joy of the resurrection will you pray with me Lord Jesus thank you so much for not only dying for our sins but being laid in the grave and being raised from the dead

[41 : 18] Lord Jesus we acknowledge that you are currently seated at the right hand of God on high that you welcome us to your throne to give us grace in time of need we acknowledge that you are interceding right now for all of us who believe in you that you're building your church among the nations that you are receiving glory and honor and praise and majesty from all of the heavenly hosts surrounding the throne you are altogether glorious thank you Lord Jesus and we rest in knowing that not only are you alive but you're one day closer to returning it's your name we pray amen a ending a ending a Thank you.