

**The Tomb is Empty**  
Mark 16:1-16:8

Let's get to the details...

In each of the Gospels, the women followers of Jesus come to the tomb on Easter Sunday and find it empty. These women are witnesses to Jesus' death (15:40), his burial (15:47), and now the empty tomb (16:6). Mark's account is brief, but powerful.

Related to the empty of the tomb: 1. Historical, Personal, Missional

3 Directives: (1) Let the evidence [for the resurrection] challenge your mind; (2) Let the grace of Jesus change your heart; (3) Let the mission of Jesus consume your life.

**1. LET THE EVIDENCE CHALLENGE YOUR MIND (6)**

"You seek Jesus ... *He has risen*; he is not here"

This is the resurrection announcement. The Greek construction is called a divine passive: God did it!

- The new temple is being raised up on the third day (**14:58; 15:29**).
- HE is the new place to meet God; all we need is Jesus.
- This reality changes everything!

And this challenges the mind!

There are three things skeptics often say: (1) Jesus was *just another Messianic figure*, (2) The Gospels *are Myth*, (3) Primitive people believed everything, including the miraculous.

**Objection #1: "Just Another Messiah"**

**Jewish guy on a plane... Feast of purim...**

Mark shows us that the movement didn't die with Jesus' death. We read Acts that this little group changed the world.

Before Jesus' incarnation there were dozens of Messianic movements. But each time the Messianic figure like this died, the movement died.

In 200 years, Christianity basically took over the Roman Empire.

The skeptic can't ignore this "circumstantial evidence." The church exploded. The disciples were transformed immediately.

- What made this movement different? The Messiah rose from the dead!

From a purely historical perspective, you have to ask, *what happened?*

Why *this movement* among the hundreds of others - turned the world upside down? Why did they go preach it & die for it?

“As a historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him.” NT Wright

Those who deny that Jesus was raised from the dead, often use two objections: (a) “literary argument” and the (b) “miracle argument.” Mark shows us how these don’t work.

### Objection #2: Literary Argument:

“The Gospels Are Myth”

Skeptics say, “We don’t know what happened. We can’t believe these four Gospels. *They were written many years after the death of Jesus from second and third hand sources.* They’re legends.”

Mark challenges you.

- In 15:40, 47, 16:1, Mark writes down the names of these women who saw the empty tomb. 3 times in 8 verses.

So why does he write their names down, three times? (2 Reasons)

**#1 This is how first century historians wrote, not legend writers.**

**Richard Bauckham** in his book *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, explains the four Gospels are closely based on eyewitness testimony of those who knew Jesus. He tells us that if you study ancient historiography, you understand that this passage does **not AT ALL** resemble a *legend*. Mark bears all the marks of an ancient historian.

Ancient historians gave more weight to **still living eyewitnesses** than written documents or any other source of proof.

- "saw" "see" in each of the Gospels. In Mark:
- It couldn't be clearer that each of them were appealing to their role as eyewitnesses.

Greeks, Romans, Papias & others all valued still living eyewitnesses who were **personally involved participants** for history writing.

Mark collected from eyewitnesses and wrote his work, mainly from apostles, and primarily from Peter, but *they flee in ch 14*, then we have the curious mentioning of Simon and his two sons Alexander and Rufus, then the women. Named people are not there by accident.

Why? The were there, involved participants remember details, and if the eyewitnesses were still around, you could go ask them! You could **cross-examine** them. You could put one in one room, and one in another and ask them questions to see if their story matched up.

“Eyewitnesses were always the source of choice for history.”

Throughout Mark, he is naming. Why is he doing this? They are the marks of history. They are like *footnotes, Citations*.

- He's saying: anyone reading this, go talk to these women. This is history not legends given centuries later.

**#2 He writes down their names because if you were making this up, to convince the ancient world, you wouldn't make women as the eyewitnesses... unless it happened like this.**

- **Further proof, Celsus**, a Greek pagan philosopher, in 2<sup>nd</sup> century was very against Christianity. Here was one of his main arguments: One of the reasons, we know that it can't be true is that it is based on the testimony of women! **"We all know women are hysterical."** Celsus referred to "the gossip of women about the empty tomb." Why did he say this? IN ancient cultures, women were marginalized.

But you know what this means?

- If Christians were making this up, they would not have used women.... **UNLESS IT HAPPENED LIKE THIS**. Unless they actually saw Jesus.
- Also, Mary Magdalene, was not only a woman, she was a formerly demon-possessed women. She heads the list in all four Gospels. If the account was fabricated, you would not have this lady as your witness – unless it happened!

Mark is challenging you. So, you should at least have the intellectual integrity to examine this honestly.

"Christians just believe what they've been told... They should examine... So should the skeptic."

### **Objection #3: Miracle Argument**

"These people were primitive people; gullible, first century people. We modern people can't believe in miracles."

Mark tells us repeatedly that Jesus predicted his death. Jesus kept saying, "on the **third day**, on the third day."

Notice that IT IS THE THIRD DAY. Is everyone believing? NO!

- **The ladies were bringing spices to anoint the body**. They weren't expecting the resurrection! **Verse 3, "who is going to roll away the stone?"** They spent a fortune on these spices.
- **The disciples went home!** John tells us they were hiding.

**This is strange! ... "Hey, it's the third day. Shouldn't we go take a look? It can't hurt! Not one disciple!"**

So, was it gullible people who didn't know any better believing in the resurrection? No. Notice the Angel – “**he told you**” (7)

They were just as skeptical as modern man, and maybe more so.

- **Greek and Romans** didn't believe in Resurrection. They believed that you needed to be separated from your body.
- **Jewish people** believed in a **final resurrection** when the entire world was resurrection, not many believed in a personal, bodily resurrection.
  - Beyond that, **no Jew was ready to worship a man as God**, but they did! Because they let the evidence speak to them.

C.S. Lewis says we are all tempted of “**chronological snobbery.**” We want to think that *the past was less than the present*. “We are more advanced and therefore better and smarter.”

- Don't be a chronological snob. Don't be lazy.

I'm afraid many unbelievers are being glib and dismissive.

**"I can't believe in resurrection because those things don't happen." Exactly! That's why it's a big deal! Big enough for you to let the evidence at least challenge you!**

**See, the resurrection is not just a nice symbol; it is historical.**

“He is not here. He has risen. .. as he told you”

- Just another Messiah? – Explain this explosive growth
- A Myth? It bears all the marks of history
- Primitive people believed miracles? – they were just as skeptical as you

Do you really want to put this question on the shelf? Could it be that Jesus was different from every other Messianic figure, that he did rise from the dead and that's why Christianity changed the ancient world?

Could it be that Mark is reporting the events just as they happened? Could it be that they were not more likely to believe the resurrection – but believed it because they saw him?

Let the evidence, challenge your mind...

## **2. LET HIS GRACE CHANGE YOUR HEART**

“Tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee”

**Do you see the grace of Jesus in this? These disciples turned their back on Jesus! Yet, he says, “I'll see them in Galilee”**

Notice **what he doesn't say:**

- “I will settle the score in Galilee”
- “Tell those faithless, backstabbing guys I might reinstate you.”
- “If you straighten up then I may see you”

Jesus operates different than us.

**“And Peter.”** Only Mark’s Gospel includes this. I think it’s probably because Mark’s Primary source is. Peter never got over this

Why include this?

- **A Practical Purpose:** So Peter would know to go to Galilee with the others.
- **A Gospel Purpose:** The Gospel is NOT “clean your life up, straighten up, fly right, *maybe God will accept you.*” You come as you are, Jesus forgives and changes you.

Notice the nature of the Gospel here:

### **#1 Peter’s (and our) Need for Grace**

Peter fell hard! He boasted in his ability. “Even if they all fall away, I never will.”

"For all have sinned & fallen short of God's glory." (Rom 3:23)

We have grieved him by a thousand falls.

His salvation was not in his strength, by his goodness; by his works; it was by Jesus' grace.

### **#2 The Savior’s Giving of Grace**

John 21 shows us how it happened – breakfast with Jesus.

“For it is by grace you’ve been saved through faith...” (Eph. 2:8)

2 Cor. 5. “God through Christ reconciled us to himself, “*not counting our trespasses against us...*”

Kimberly falling down, I laughed, and then said, “you okay baby?” But these days you have an **automatic scoring system**, you can just hit delete. And you get a new frame.

**We have all fallen. We have all slipped and made a fool of ourselves. We need our errors dealt with.**

Psalm 130: "If you kept a record of sins who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness."

Jesus alone has the authority to forgive and the grace to forgive.

## “AND PETER” gives us hope!

- Peter let the evidence challenge his mind, and then he let the grace of Jesus change his heart.

Screwtape, “The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact, the resurrection, & a single theological doctrine, redemption.” Jesus rose. Jesus redeems. Believe.

### **#3 The Effect of Saving Grace**

Think about it. We have Peter just a chapter earlier, denying Jesus three times, in front of a little girl, *cowardly*. And in the book of Acts, he is the leader of the early church preaching boldly in front of the authorities, just minutes away from the tomb of Jesus.

"those who are forgiven much, love much." Peter becomes the preacher grace, writer of grace.

- 1 Peter 5:10 - “God of all grace”
- 2 Peter 3:18 - “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- “God gives grace to the humble”

Jesus transformed Peter by his grace.

The Grace of Jesus gave Peter humility and boldness at the same time.

That’s what the Gospel does. The more you know and love the Gospel, the more humble you become, and the more fearless you become.

Luther said that we experience grace in three ways: “Once for all, again and again, and more and more.”

### **Do you know this grace?**

Can you say like Peter, “I am a failure.” “I have nothing to bring to Jesus. I admit that I need his forgiveness and grace?”

*Will you see that you are not saved by your work and your Past but Christ’s work and His Past?*

I have someone close to me that said that they wanted to be baptized but didn’t feel good enough and they didn’t understand enough – I said, you are actually understanding it when you realize you aren’t good enough – it’s all about grace.

“And Peter” - Put your own name in there – “and Tony”

Let the evidence challenge your mind; let his grace change your heart;

### **3. LET HIS MISSION CONSUME YOUR LIFE**

What do you live for if there is no resurrection?

In the recent movie *The Soloist*, Robert Downy plays a columnist who discovers a musically gifted but tragically schizophrenic man (Jamie Foxx) living homeless on the streets and tries to piece together the man's life. But more interestingly, there's a brief scene in which the reporter is writing a column about an atheist group. Downy interviews this guy and is trying to understand his curious belief system:

"So you guys are united by *non-belief*?"

"So you *NON-gather*, and *Non-worship*?"

"So there's not a lot to talk about is there!?"

The guy is like, "Yeah, but we have a website"

"Is there anything else you don't believe in?"

We are united by belief, and it's belief in the resurrection. Paul said that if there is no resurrection *then our faith is in vain!*

The resurrection gives us meaning because we know that what we do here matters, and what we experience here is not the end. It's only the beginning.

**#1: "Don't Be Afraid" – *we have a living hope***

The resurrection teach us that this life is not all there is! God is going to renew this material world!

Luther said, "I'd plant a tree... think of how well it would do!"

There's nothing better than ordinary life, except that it leaves us. Food, fireplaces, hugs, family, companionship... God is going to renew all things.

The resurrection gives us peace, courage, and unshakable hope. It helps us face our **hardest times** – with joy!

Acts 2: resurrection & Spirit. Explosion of joy. "they are filled w new wine" -

"you have put more joy in my heart than they have when wine and grain abound" - Ps 4

Joni Eareckson Tada, quadriplegic, was in an accident when 18 years old. Paralyzed from neck down; in a wheel chair. She described the grief and then the joy that she experienced one day in worship at a conference. The worship leader asked the people, some 600, to kneel in prayer. She says:

Sitting there, I was reminded that in heaven I will be free to jump, dance, kick and do aerobatics. And although I'm sure Jesus will be delighted to watch me rise on tiptoe, there's something I plan to do that may please him more. If possible, somewhere, sometime before the party gets going, sometime before the guests are called to the banquet table at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, the first

thing I plan to do on resurrection legs is to drop on grateful, glorified knees. I will quietly kneel at the feet of Jesus.... And afterword, I shall spring to my feet, stretch out my arms, and shout out to anyone within earshot of the whole universe “Worthy the lamb.”

That sounds like a good plan. Bow on grateful, glorified knees, and then dance. Elsewhere she says:

I can't wait for the day when I'm given my brand new glorified body. I'm going to stand up, stretch, dance, kick, do a aerobics, comb my own hair, blow my own nose, and what is so poignant is that *I'll finally be able to wipe my own tears, but I won't need to, because the Bible tells us in the book of Revelation that God will personally wipe away every tear.*

The Gospel promises new bodies, new hope...

“I can still hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in Righteousness-powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone who is spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who has cerebral palsy, is brain-injured, or has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic depressive.

No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the message of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope!”

Phil 1:21 “to live is Christ, to die is gain.”

Rom. 8:18 - “I consider the sufferings of this present world not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

George Hebrbert Poem – “**Death used to be an executioner, but the Gospel has made him just a gardener.**”(1593 1633)

**We are a people of the resurrection! Don't Be Afraid.**

**#2: “Go” – The resurrection means we have meaningful work to do**

- Go tell this good news – that God raised Jesus from the dead; We too, having now read through to the end of Mark's narrative, have been entrusted with the message of the resurrection. **How can we keep silent?**

- **Go fight the brokenness of this world**; work until God makes all things new!

In 1 Cor 15, Paul spent 57 vs on the resurrection. How does he end?

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (58)*

Jesus didn't rise from the dead so you could play guitar hero for 12 hours a day.

Plane full of believers: Ladies in Kenya, Guys in Ukraine, team in Uganda

Jesus saves us from futility, gives our lives meaning and significance, because *everything that is done in his name here matters.*

The resurrection changes everything.

- This was what changed the world.
- This changed the disciples.

John said, "We saw him, we touched him"

Do you believe?

- Let the evidence challenge your mind
- Let his grace change your heart
- Let his mission consume your life

**The tomb is empty; the throne is occupied. Believe! Rejoice! Relax! Labor! Anticipate!**