

April 2, 2023

“The Empty Tomb”
Lesson 1

Luke 24:1-12

Intro

After being taken down from the cross, Jesus’ body was wrapped in burial clothes. Spices were put with the clothes and in the tomb to cover the stench from decay. He was then put into Joseph of Arimathea’s own tomb. This is noteworthy because strangers were not generally buried in the tomb of another family. Ledges were chiseled into the sides of the rock so many bodies could be buried in the same tomb. Then a large flat rock was used to seal the tomb’s entrance, preventing thieves from stealing valuable items or even the body itself.

The doctrine of resurrection from the dead is found in several OT passages, among them Job 19:25-25, Isaiah 26:19, and Daniel 12:1-2, 13. In addition, some non-Biblical texts (2 Baruch, 2 Maccabees) talk about the physical resurrection of the righteous dead. So by Jesus’ day, the idea of a physical resurrection was well-known and accepted by many Jews. During His ministry, Jesus predicted several times about his death, burial, and resurrection. However, the idea of a suffering and then resurrected Savior was not one that most Jews could understand or accept. Even Jesus’ disciples didn’t get it.

Read Luke 24:1-12

1. vs. 1: The women who had been following Jesus now go to the tomb to put spices on His body
 - The first day of the week is Sunday
 - The Jewish Sabbath is sundown Friday to sundown Saturday
 - This is the first opportunity they have had to come do this service for Jesus
2. vs. 2: The women found the stone in front of the tomb rolled away
 - Not only was a stone there, but by Pilate’s order there were soldiers guarding the tomb
 - The Jewish leaders also put a seal on it (likely a Roman seal with wax on it)
 - This would be proof is someone tried to move the stone and remove the body
 - The stones were so big it took several strong adults to move them
3. vs. 3: The women entered the tomb, but the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb
 - The Law of Moses says touching a dead body makes one unclean
 - This may be why John didn’t enter the tomb but Peter did in John 20:5
 - The women do not seem concerned about this possibility; they enter anyway
 - No doubt they were confused about the missing body; they may also have been worried
 - Grave robbing was a frequent occurrence
 - If robbers took the body, that’s another indignity to Jesus from their perspective
4. vs. 4: The women “wonder” about what they’ve seen
 - This probably involves wondering who robbed the grave and where the body went
 - They are confused and can’t make sense of an empty tomb

“Suddenly” two men appear there with them

They are certainly angels, as Luke will later describe them in 24:24

Their clothes “gleam like lightning”—not typical of other people’s clothes!

They have appeared “suddenly”

Had they been human, the women would likely have seen or heard them

5. vs. 5: The women’s response here further proves the men are angels

They are frightened when they see them, as happens when people see angels

The women bow down in honor and respect of divine beings

Matthew’s account has the angels saying “Do not be afraid”

This is a usual response from angels sent by God to give people messages

Luke’s account has them asking an important question of the women:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

This is the first reporting of Jesus as resurrected and alive

6. vs. 6: The angels continue their announcement, and begin with reminders

“He is not here; he has risen!”

This is the great news of the Gospel—Jesus rose from the dead!

They remind the women that Jesus told them this would happen

7. vs. 7: Here the angels summarize Jesus’ teaching about his suffering and resurrection

They remind the women of what they have heard

Hearing things repeated helps to recall and connect the key ideas

They use the term “Son of Man”, which Jesus used often to refer to himself

It seems to have its roots in Daniel 7:13-14

Jesus used it to show both his divine power and authority, but also his humanity
and humility

He had divine power to defeat sin and death

He “humbled himself by becoming obedient to death”

8. vs. 8-9: These verses detail two important elements

First, the women *remembered* what Jesus had said

The angels’ reminders stirred the women’s memories

Second, the women take action and go tell the 11 remaining disciples and others

The previous unit showed Jesus’ concern for those on the edges of society

Physical challenges, demon-possessed, children, women

This focus continues here, as women are the first to hear of Jesus’ resurrection

Women were not allowed to testify in court, being considered unreliable

Here they are the first “testifiers” to the most important event in history

9. vs. 10: Several of these women are named in this verse

Mary Magdalene had seven demons in her, removed by Jesus in Luke 8

Joanna was the wife of the manager of Herod Antipas’ household

Mary the mother of James

This appears to be Jesus’ mother, as James is his half-brother

However, no commentaries deal with this, so I am unable to verify this idea

The key idea from this verse is that these were women of standing with Jesus
Mary had been healed, and followed him for a long time
Joanna chose to follow Jesus rather than stay allied to Herod's house
Mary is Jesus' mother
As people of standing, their testimony carries great weight

10. vs. 11: Unfortunately, the disciples "did not believe the women"

They may not have believed them because they were women
They more likely didn't believe it because it "seemed...like nonsense"
An empty tomb? Totally unbelievable!

11. vs. 12: Peter (and John, according to his gospel) run to the tomb to see for themselves
Peter sees the burial clothes and "went away, wondering...what had happened"
The presence of the burial clothes but no body speaks against a grave robber
The robber would not have taken the cloth off to get just the body
The robber would have left the body to take any valuable items
Peter is left pondering both what Jesus said and what the women have reported

Application: The women at the tomb received the first Good News about Jesus' resurrection. They and the disciples (once they came to believe the news also) proclaimed this message to the world. We have the same role today. We are to proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection to the world. We are called to be His modern-day disciples, going from just *believing* that He rose from the dead to *proclaiming* the Good News to this world and time.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that we too can rejoice in the Good News of Your resurrection, just like the women that first saw this truth. We ask that the Spirit make us both sensitive to opportunities to proclaim this truth, and for boldness to do so. In the name of Jesus who rose from the dead we pray, Amen.

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