

# The Empty Tomb – *Luke 24:1-12*

**Introduction** – An empty tomb. So what? Everyone knows that Easter is about the tomb of Jesus being empty. And the point? The point is that Jesus rose from the dead just as He said, and according to the Word of God. But this part of the story doesn't begin with Jesus standing in their midst in a resurrected body. It starts with an empty tomb and no Jesus anywhere. The reactions of the women and then the disciples is telling. Maybe you remember a day when you had doubts about this story too. Maybe you occasionally wonder. Maybe you still doubt the story; and maybe you think it isn't that important to being a Christian anyway. If any of that is true for you, you find yourself in good company with the characters in these verses. And like those characters, the God of these Scriptures has something to say to you.

**The Empty Tomb** (vv1-12) – While the fact of the resurrection is already evident with an empty tomb, Luke's focus is upon the lack of expectation of such an event by those who had followed Him.

**A Sad Verse** (v1) – The women hurried out on the first day of the week, after the Sabbath, but they had missed the point. They were going to anoint a dead body with spices. They were living by sight. Jesus had died and they had seen Him buried. They may have believed in a resurrection, but a general one, a day far off in the future.

**Greatly Perplexed** (vv2-4) – They found the stone rolled away, the tomb empty, and themselves “*completely at a loss for words.*” We should sympathize: they didn't have the rest of the story as we do before us in the Word, they didn't have the entirety of the New Testament nor thousands of years of Easter Sunday sermons. All of a sudden, what they did have were two shining angels before them.

**They Remembered His Words** (vv5-8) – Here is the central point. It didn't seem to matter that they had literally walked with Jesus for years. It didn't matter that they had seen him crucified. Spiritual eyes are only opened when God opens them, and His means of doing so is the Word, in this case remembering the words of Jesus. Angelic instruction over the words of Jesus, like the Spirit-breathed Word of God, quickens deadened hearts.

**What Was Preached** (v7) – The angels seemed to emphasize two points. First, the Scripture had required that Jesus be delivered over to be crucified. Jesus Himself had said so (i.e. Luke 9:44, 11:29-30, 18:31-33). God had been in control of the death of Jesus from beginning to end. And the end was His resurrection. And this is the second point. Jesus is the Son of Man, a title which identifies Him with the victorious King in Dan 7:13-14. His resurrection declares Jesus to be the Son of God and the Son of Man, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with power (Rom 1:4).

**Telling Others** (vv9-11) – Luke seems to emphasize the same problem over again. The women were perplexed before. Now, the disciples think they are telling stories, speaking *nonsense*. Immediately, we can identify with the women as they witness – and some of us can identify with the doubters; we know what it is to think of this story as an “*idle tale.*”

**Seeing for Himself** (v12) – Peter, upon hearing the story, however, is pricked at the heart. He runs to the tomb. He needs to investigate this for Himself. Luke later tells us that Peter finally is convinced, through the instruction of the Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus had to die and that it was impossible that He not be raised from the dead (Acts 2:24).

**Looking for Jesus in all the Wrong Places** – The women were rebuked, “*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” They had missed the point of the crucifixion and the promises of God. Where does the world still look for Jesus in the wrong places?

**The Picture-Perfect World** – Some reject the gospel or grow cold in their faith because the world did not become perfect immediately after Christ's resurrection nor immediately after someone is born again. Sin and death still remain, life is still filled with hardships, setbacks, and disappointments. Stop looking for Jesus in *your* perfect world. It is His perfect world

**Where Everything Makes Sense Right Now** – Some say they can't follow Christ because they can't understand how Jesus could be fully God and fully man, or how God could be Three and One at the same time. Or it doesn't make sense to say that you don't have to work for your salvation somehow. Or they can't make sense of cancer or a broken relationship or their loneliness and believe in a God who is in control and good. But we only see in a mirror dimly – stop looking for a Jesus who makes life a docu-drama where everything gets solved and wrapped up in 43 minutes plus commercials.

**Just a Good Teacher** – Some say they don't need to believe in miracles or in a resurrection; they can simply believe in Jesus as a good man, a good example, a good teacher. But He would in fact then be a liar or a lunatic, because He claimed to be God and He claimed that He would die and rise again on the third day. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we Christians are the most to be pitied. Stop looking for Jesus among the pantheon of human philosophers and the philanthropists.

**Remember His Words** – Here is what the resurrected, crowned King of kings said –

*“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...”* If you are looking for the way to heaven, for the truth about life, and if you are looking for life, abundant, full life – remember His Words.

*“Your sins are forgiven...”* If you are tired of the guilt, the shame, the excuse making, the hiding, and the loneliness that comes from sin – remember His Words.

*“Whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man will also confess before the angels of God...”* If you want certainty to know what will be said about you and about your life for eternity, if you want to know with certainty that your life matters and will count, remember His Words.

*“Today, you will be with me in Paradise...”* If you want assurance of rest, of desires fulfilled, of reconciled and restored relationship with the One who made you, remember His Words.

*“Take up your cross and follow Me...”* If you want a purpose, a plan, a reason to walk in this life through thick and thin, if you want to know that the trials matter, that sacrificing now for a later harvest is worth it, remember His Words.

His Word is His life and His Word will have its way with the world. He will have His way with you as well. But it probably will not follow your well thought out plan. His is better though. Trust Him.

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*Dave Hatcher – Resurrection Day, April 17, 2022 (previously delivered Easter, 2007)*