

Hanging Out with Jesus

The Empty Tomb: What (Else) Is Missing?

Unedited Transcript

Matthew 27:61-28:8 & Luke 23:55-24:12

Well, good morning! It's great to be with you this morning. Thanks for coming. This is the best place to be on a Friday morning. It's fun to be with you guys this morning. Let me pray, then we're going to jump into this lesson this morning. Lord, thanks so much for bringing us out here this morning to be together, to be brothers in this great adventure that it is to follow Jesus. To be salt and light in the world, Lord, it takes a lot of building up of our hearts and our minds. Lord, help us to dive into your word this morning. Father, may it encourage us, may it inspire us. Lord, may it lead us to live lives that are a great example of what it means to be a Christ follower, Lord, and more importantly may we live lives that bring you glory in Jesus name we pray amen.

Well, we're going to talk about a great passage, set of passages today, a great place in the sequence of the story of Jesus' life. We're going to talk about the discovery of the empty tomb. I'm excited! You remember a few weeks ago I was here. We talked about that voyage from up to Calvary, where Jesus was beaten nearly to death and then finally was crucified. That was a brutal place to be. Today is exciting! Today is positive! Today's the resurrection, the discovery of an empty tomb!

The sacrament of baptism in many ways is a reflection of the resurrection. The going into the water if you're a "dive in the wool Baptist" ... Grady Nutt was a Baptist comedian, who used to say that the word "baptist" in Greek literally means, "Hold them under till they bubble." It came from the process of dying cloth. You would hold the cloth under the water until all the bubbles came up to get the air out of it to die the cloth thoroughly. You go down into the water it symbolizes going into the grave. Then when you come up back out of the water, it symbolizes being born again to a new life, right? That's baptism.

Well, I had a baptistic experience myself. A few weeks back I took up trail biking. I would call it mountain biking, but we live in Florida. You call it minor elevation change biking. We'll just call it trail biking. Going out on these trails out on Oviedo it's a blast. I have a friend that I do it with that got me into it. I've ridden out there a few times now. The first time I went out there we road for an hour. That was fun. The second time I went out there we road for fifteen miles. He nearly killed me. That was not as fun but it got to be fun.

We've gone a few times since. The last time that I went we were riding along these trails and we'd gone out and back a few times. We got back to the parking lot and he said, "Hey, do you want to go one more time for fifteen or twenty minutes? Do one more little loop?" I looked at the time I'm like, "Yes, that'd be great. Let's do another fifteen minute loop." We had gone by these trails, down on these trails, and it's by the Little Econ River. He came around the corner. He stops the bike and he goes, "Look." We looked out into the river. There is a huge alligator on the bank. I'm like, "That is so cool to be riding along this river that has this alligator in it."

We had ridden down this trail before. There was a point where there's about an eight-foot drop from the trail down a bank and into the river. We're maybe twenty-five, thirty yards up the trail from where we'd seen the alligator. I had noticed the last time we'd ridden it that the trail came very close to the edge. The edge was washing out. Every time there's a heavy rain it washes out just a little bit more. I thought to myself, "I need to watch that spot where the trail gets really close to the edge because I don't want to go off the trail."

I'm riding the bike. I look and I see there's the spot. I look right at it as I drove my bike off the trail. My front wheel went off. I tried to pull it back on. Then my back wheel went off. I fell sideways and hit my ribs on the corner of the trail. Then I bounced out eight-feet down into the water with the bike, holding the bike my feet still on the peddles. It occurred to me about halfway down that we had just seen an alligator. That's when I started yelling.

I had about a half a second of yelling before I hit the water and went under and came back up holding the bike. It was not a positive experience. I did not feel like I had been born again into a new life. I just felt like I better get out of this river because I don't know how hungry that alligator is. About a week later I saw a newspaper article that they had pulled a thirteen-foot gator out of there! Somebody had got a licensed and killed a thirteen-foot gator in that river. I'm pretty sure it was the one that I had seen. It probably wasn't.

I just remember going under in that split second thinking, "I've got to get up out of this water." If somebody had been standing right there, they would have seen me rise up very quickly. I think I probably elevated out of the water, levitated out of the water. Then my friend came back. After he stopped laughing, he helped me get the bike out. That was my baptism experience over the last few weeks. Easter is about the risen Savior. How many of you in your church you say ... You go on Easter Sunday what do you say to each other? You say ... He is risen. Then the answer is... He is risen indeed.

Why do we say that? Well, it's the central point of Christianity. It's the central point of Christianity. He is risen. He is risen indeed. We're going to look this morning at the story of the discovery of the empty tomb. Here's what we're going to cover. We're going to talk about the empty tomb. First thing we're going to talk about is the chain of custody of the body of Jesus. This is important from a factual, historical stand point to really prove that Jesus did die and was raised again. Then we'll talk about this encounter that the women had with the angel. He is risen. He's not here. He's risen. Then we're going to talk about the impact of the resurrection on our sin.

Chain of Custody

Let's start with the chain of custody here. If you have a bible, turn to Matthew chapter twenty-seven. We're going to go back forth between Matthew twenty-seven and the first part of twenty-eight and Luke twenty-three and the first part of twenty-four. This story is in all four of the gospels. We're going to look at the Matthew and the Luke passage because I think between the two of them they give the best picture of the whole story. The stories are remarkably similar, yet, different enough that you'd feel like each author wrote his own recollection of the story or what he had collected in information from people.

You have here in Matthew twenty-seven verse sixty-one it says this, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb." In Luke, you don't need to turn there, but in Luke it says, "The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was

laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment."

It's Friday. Jesus has been taken down off the cross. He's been placed in the tomb. The women are there. They see him placed in the tomb. They watch him be laid in the tomb. They watch the tomb being prepared. They watch the stone rolled across. There's a chain of custody. My son is eighteen. He got a job over the summer. He had to take a drug test. When he came home, he had this piece of paper. I said, "What's that?" He showed it to me. It was a chain of custody form. It was to make sure that cup that he peed in never left anybody's sight, that they knew exactly where it went from step one, to step two, to step three, to step four, so that nobody could do anything to it, right? Nobody could put something in there that wasn't supposed to be there or not put something in there that was supposed to be there.

You had that chain of custody. The bible gives us this. The story of Jesus' resurrection gives us this chain of custody. We know what happened to the body because the women were there when he was buried. He was taken off the cross. Joseph of Arimathea gave them the tomb to put him in. He was placed in there. There's another step in the chain of custody. That happens in Matthew 27:62 to the end of the chapter it says this, "The next day, that is after the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, 'Sir, we remember how that impostor ...', they don't like Jesus very much, 'said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore, order the tomb to be made secure until the third day lest his disciples go and steal him a way and tell the people he has risen from the dead. The last fraud will be worse than the first." The first being his claims to be the Messiah and then this last fraud would be his resurrection.

"Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers. Go make it as secure as you can.' They went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard." You see, the Jewish authorities went to Pilate and, basically, had this interesting interaction. Because if you remember back when Pilate tried to pardon Jesus, he tried to say, "Look, you can have Barabbas this murderer back, or you can have Jesus back. It's a tradition that we release ..." Of course, you're going to have me release this rabbi not this murderer. They say, "No. We want you to kill the rabbi." Pilate's already been feeling sort of like a tool, like he's been used by the Jewish authorities. He's in a very tricky political situation.

He basically goes, "Look. You want to guard the tomb. You guard the tomb. Rome's not going to participate in this anymore." It's not Roman soldiers that go out to guard the tomb. It's temple guards. It's the Jewish. It's the Pharisee's temple guard that goes out and guards the tomb. This is not a happy thing for these guards because technically if anything were to happen, if they had been overwhelmed, overcome by the disciples, and the body had been stolen, the penalty for that, for their failure, could've been up to the death penalty. These guys are very motivated to make sure that the tomb is guarded.

They get there the next morning. There's no disturbance. They're there to make sure that nothing happens. They're going to make sure that everything is intact. They are there. We had this chain of custody from the cross to the tomb that historically is pretty solid for what happened to Jesus body.

"He is not here, for he has risen."

What happens next? Well, Matthew twenty-eight tells the story as well as Luke. I'm going to use the Luke passage. If you have a bible, go head turn to Luke twenty-four. Luke twenty-four and I'm going to read the first twelve verses here.

He says, "But on the first day of the week at early dawn they went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared ...", remember the women had gone. They had seen the body be secured in the tomb. Then they had gone home. Prepared the spices and ointments that would be, basically, to preserve the body. Then they had taken the Sabbath day off that would've been Saturday. Now it's the first day of the week. They're going back the third ... Killed on the first day. In the tomb during the second day. Now we're in the third day, okay.

"They found the stone rolled away from the tomb." Mark says that they were actually worried about how they were going to get the stone away from the tomb. "They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. When they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. As they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.'"

"They remembered his words. Returning from the tomb, they told all of these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now, it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother James and the other women with them who told these things to the Apostles. These words seemed them an idle tale. They did not believe them, but Peter rose", and John says that John went with him, "and ran to the tomb. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves. He went home marveling at what had happened."

We get the story straight from the angels. We find out later that ... Through all these passages we know that these were angels that appeared there not to raise Jesus from the dead but angels ... The job of an angel is to be a messenger. They were there to proclaim, "He has risen." We say that because the angel said it first. The angels were the first testifiers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is risen. He's not here. These witnesses believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. You have the women who saw it, then you have Peter who went in and saw it, and John. We have the disciple John going in and seeing it. They believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Now there are a lot of historical and logical arguments that we can make about the resurrection. We know that as early as 70-AD we have written records from outside of Christian writings from Josephus in 70-AD, from Tacitus in 115-AD of these historians writing about this Jewish rabbi that his believers were convinced had risen from the dead. Josephus was a Pharisee, who had been brought up a Pharisee and been a Pharisee, and then had gone over to the Romans to write the history of the Jewish people. He had no desire to see this myth prolonged. He was reporting what was widely believed to be true by the church.

If you want to really get into some of the logical arguments behind the resurrection why the ... There's lots of options as to what could've happened. Maybe they had a mass hallucination. Maybe he was never really dead in the first place. Maybe the disciples stole him and then told stories. There's logical arguments that really poke holes in all of those arguments. The most likely explanation for the reason that the tomb was empty is that Jesus rose from the dead. If you want to go look at some of logical arguments, I'll tell you go to <http://reasonablefaith.org>. There's a guy named, William Lane Craig, who is an apologist. He's done extensive studies. He's pulls in all the other writings about that. Go look at <http://reasonablefaith.org> and you can see some of the logical explanations, the historical explanations, for why Jesus rising from the dead is the best explanation for an empty tomb.

Paul tells us why it's important for us theologically. First Corinthians 15:12 through nineteen says this, "Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead. How can some of you say that there is no resurrection to the dead?" Already in the Corinthian church we have people that are doubting. Did he really rise from the dead? It doesn't really matter if he rose from the dead. I mean couldn't he just be the Son of God that God sent down. He was a great rabbi. He taught us the way that we're supposed to worship God. He taught us the way that we're supposed to live our lives. Isn't that enough? That's enough.

Because there were a whole group of religious leaders, the Sadducees, they didn't believe in a resurrection from the dead. They still wanted to follow Jesus. They just didn't want to follow Jesus the Son of God. Paul says, "That's false. You can't do it that way. If there's no resurrection from the dead", verse 13, "then not even Christ has been raised. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain. Your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised."

If you have a pen, underline this in your bible verse 17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we of all people are most to be pitied." If in Christ we have hope in this life only, there is to next life, there is no resurrection from the dead, then we as Christians Paul says, "We are pitiful. We are pathetic." How could we follow a religion like this? How could we base our whole lives around the idea that if we follow Jesus, we live eternally with him in Heaven? We're dupes.

The fact of the resurrection is the theological centerpiece of the Christian faith. Without the resurrection from the dead, without Jesus resurrecting from the dead, we are fools, you and I. In Romans 4:25 Paul says this, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised for our justification." He was raised. "Jesus died", Paul says, "and he came back from the dead." When the angels spoke to the women, they declared he is not here for he is risen. When Mary Magdalene and the other women looked at the tomb and they saw the empty cloths and they talked to the angels, they believed that he was risen from the dead. When Peter and John came running to the tomb, they went into the tomb.

John twenty verse six and seven says, "They went into the tomb one at a time. They saw the empty burial cloth and they believed." They were astounded and they believed.

Your Sin

Which brings us to our third point and that is that there was something else missing from the tomb besides Jesus body. When Jesus died and rose again, he accomplished two incredibly important cosmic acts. One, he atoned for the sins of those who believed in him. The debt was paid. When he breathed his last breath in John 19:30 John records his last breath, the last word he says as, "Tetelestai", tetelestai. What does that mean? That means, "It is finished."

This was a phrase that you would use in a marketplace. When you brought your purchase to the vendor, he would tell you how much you owed. Then you would pay. When you had paid what you owed him in full, he would say, "Tetelestai", this transaction is over. The obligation is fulfilled. The debt is paid. We're finished here. When Jesus breathes his last breath on the cross and he says tetelestai, he's saying, "The debt is paid." Your sins, if you believe in Christ, your sins were paid for when Jesus died. The penalty for those sins was paid.

Paul doesn't just say that he died for our sins, but also that he was raised to life for our justification. This is the second cosmic act: justification. In God's eyes, those who believe in and follow Christ are justified. That means that Christ's righteousness is our righteousness. Justification is a legal term. Our guilt is literally removed from us because Jesus paid the penalty through the atonement. Now moving forward his perfectness, his righteousness, is imputed onto us. We look like Jesus in God's eyes from a legal stand point.

I want you to do a little exercise with me this morning, okay. I know this is a little weird for guys. I want you to close your eyes. All right. Everybody, I want you to close your eyes. Okay. I want you to imagine this, all right. I want you think of all the sin in your life: the sinful thoughts of lust and anger, greed and resentment, cynicism and pride, and other sinful thoughts you've had today or ever. Keep your eyes closed. Now, I want you to think about the sins you committed: the hurtful words, the lies you've told, the promises you've broken, the adultery you've committed, the sex you've had outside of marriage, your temper tantrums, people you've harmed physically or not helped that you could have, things you've stolen, laws you've broken.

Are you thinking about them? Keep your eyes closed. Now, in front of the judge, the omnipotent God of the universe, the creator of all things, the infinitely Holy God, you would stand condemned, destined to pay the penalty for your sinful thoughts, words, actions, your sinful heart. Now, imagine all of this sin and guilt is heaped on Jesus. Because God loves you so much, Jesus came and took all your sins on himself and paid the price. He atoned for your sins and mine. He was executed by the Romans almost two-thousand years ago.

Mocked, flogged, nailed, raised, pierced, and suffocated to death can you see it? Can you see him lovingly and sorrowfully being taken down from the cross? Can you see his mother and Mary Magdalene and his brothers? Can you see the other women weeping at the loss of this beloved kind son and teacher and rabbi? Can you see the consequences of your sin on his broken body as they wrapped it in linens and placed him in a borrowed tomb? All your sins went in that tomb with him.

Now, stay with me. Imagine you're there on the third day. It's early in the morning. There's dew on the ground. The sun is just rising. The women had just run out of the cemetery where the tomb is. You tip toe up to the tomb. You stoop down. You look in. It's empty. The tomb is empty because Jesus has risen. In your mind's eye, look around the tomb. What else is missing from the tomb? What else is gone: Your sin. Your sin is gone. It's been paid for. It's forgiven. Open your eyes. Your sin is gone.

I hear what you're thinking my sin isn't gone. I've had my eyes open for five seconds I've already thought a lustful thing. I'm still angry with my wife. I still resent my boss. It didn't work. Listen to me it worked. Because when Jesus died and rose again, you were justified in God's eyes, but that includes sins that you haven't even committed yet. Now, comes sanctification.

As you understand and grasp the love God has for you and the terrible price that Christ paid for your sins, your desire to sin decreases but you still sin. Your sinful nature still distracts you. The devil still prowls. The world still beckons, but you are still justified. Paul explained this mystery in Romans seven and eight starting in verse twenty-one of Romans seven he says, "So I find this law at work. Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in me waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man. Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"

"Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord. Then I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law. In my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus the law of the spirit, who gives life, has set you free from the law of sin and death." In verse ten he says, "But if Christ is in you though even your body is subject to death because of sin, the spirit gives life because of ...", what, "because of righteousness", and not your righteousness, Jesus righteousness. "

There is no condemnation, guys. You've been set free from the law of sin and death. Will you still sin if you love Jesus? Yes, but as your love for Christ grows, your desire for sin will decrease. Your vulnerability to Satan's attacks will diminish. Your desire for worldly things will dwindle. Look inside the tomb one last time and recognize the truth. Jesus is not there. He is risen. Your sin is not there either. It's been paid for. It's been washed away. You are justified. Your sins are gone. You've been set free.

That brings us to our big idea, not just for this morning, but really for the whole of Christian life. **Jesus defeated death. He sets me free from my sin.** He sets you free from your sin. Live in the freedom from sin and guilt that is in a Christian life. I want to close with the lyrics of my favorite hymn, modern hymn, it's called In Christ Alone by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty. I think it captures the essence of what we've been talking about this morning. Listen to this poem.

In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground firm through the fiercest drop and storm. What heights of love. What depths of peace. When fears are stilled, when striving cease, my comforter, my all in all here in the love of Christ I stand. In Christ alone, who took on flesh fullness of God and helpless babe, this gift of love and righteousness scorned by the ones he came to save. Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied for every sin on him was laid. Here in the death of Christ I live. There in the ground his body lay, light of the world by darkness slain.

Then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave he rose again. As he stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me. For I am his and he is mine. We're bought with the precious blood of Christ. No guilt in life, no fear in death this is the power of Christ in me. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand. Till he returns or calls me home here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Listen carefully, guys, is the Holy Spirit calling you this morning to commit your life to following Christ? Is he speaking into your heart this morning that you're off track and you need to get back on track? You need to remember your salvation. You need to recommit yourself to being clothed in Christ's righteousness. Do you need to remember to accept this atonement and justification for sins? Do you want to be free? If you do, I want to talk to you.

We're going to not do a first-timer's table this morning. If you want to come and talk to me about that, come up to this table in the front this morning. If this is your second time here, we're going to have you go to the second-timer's table, yes? Okay. I'm going to pray for us right now. Then I'd love to talk to anybody that wants to talk about being free.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I can't imagine, I just can fathom the pain and the heartache that you experienced because of my sin. I can't imagine the cosmic weight that you must have felt carrying all of our sins with you to the

cross. Jesus, thank you so much for satisfying the wrath of God, the justified wrath of God, for my sin and the sin of my brothers and sisters who follow you.

Holy Spirit, I pray that you would come into this room. That you would move powerfully in our minds and hearts, Lord, that you would pull us closer to you. Jesus, we know that you're up in Heaven right now praying for us. Jesus, please, Lord, I pray that through your Father the power of the Spirit will come into these men in a mighty way. Lord, bless these men as they leave here today. As they go out into the work place and into the marketplace, into their families, into their churches, may they live as free men. May their desire for worldly things dwindle. May the attacks of Satan be weakened. May their sinful nature, Lord, become less and less and the nature of the Spirit of God become more and more. Lord, I lift these up to you for your glory in Jesus name, amen.