

Theme: John's vivid, detail-rich account of the empty tomb and the risen Jesus is the testimony of a genuine eyewitness who wants every reader to encounter the same risen King who called Mary's name that morning and transformed her grief into worship and witness.

I. Intro - Vivid Memories

- A. Runnin' On Empty - trivial; noticing Linda - life-altering!
- B. John's account is clearly a vivid personal memory

II. The Tomb Is Empty!

- A. Mary journeys to the tomb early Sunday morning
Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
John 20:1
 - 1. Each Gospel gives different pieces of what happened that morning, just like different witnesses to an event describe it from their vantage point.
 - 2. All the Gospels say it was the first day of the week
 - a. Interesting because Jesus always said the 3rd day
 - b. First day - a new beginning, a new creation!
 - c. This is why Christians worship on Sunday, not Saturday - every Sunday is resurrection day!
 - d. Every Sunday is a time to gather, remember, and celebrate the resurrection, and get a new start!
 - 3. All the Gospels also say Mary Magdalene went to the tomb (though some indicate others were there with her).
- B. A shocking discovery - the stone has been moved
Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw

that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." John 20:1-2

- 1. Mary is clearly disturbed - she may not have even looked inside the tomb, but just assumed the body was gone.
- 2. She had seen the body placed in the tomb and the stone put in place, and was disturbed that the stone had been moved.
- 3. Grave robbery was VERY common at this time
 - a. It got so bad that Emperor Claudius later ordered capital punishment to stop the practice!
 - b. People did this because the burial cloths, spices, and other items left in a tomb were very valuable.
- 4. They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have taken Him.
 - a. We - there were others with Mary (the other Gospels mention other women)
 - b. Mary is clearly distressed, not comforted by this unexpected event!

C. Peter and John verify the tomb is empty!

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.
John 20:3-7

1. Peter & John are shocked and take off to the tomb
2. John outruns Peter and arrives first (younger man)
3. John stoops, looks in, and sees the burial cloths
 - a. John is clearly giving a vivid memory of what happened that morning - a lot of details
 - b. We have discovered a lot of tombs from this time, and John describes his actions perfectly (drawing)
 1. Jesus was placed in Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb (John 19:38-41; Mark 15:43)
 2. New tombs usually had a chamber with 3 benches; the body was laid on the bench opposite the opening
 3. There was an outside door where one could stoop down to see inside without going in.
 4. The body would remain on the bench for about a year to decompose, and then the bones would be placed in an ossuary to be kept forever.
 5. John vividly describes his memory, and it matches all of this perfectly.
 - c. John sees the linen cloths are still there - grave robbers would NOT leave these!
4. Peter goes into the tomb and looks around (vv6-7)
 - a. John hesitates, but Peter rushes in!
 - b. Linen cloths, face cloth folded up in a separate place
 - c. The body is gone, but it can't be thieves - they would have taken the valuable cloths and spices!
5. John is recounting these vivid memories, and they line up with all we know of burial practices from this time!

III. The Disciples Struggle to Understand

- A. Mary clearly did not expect or understand this

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." John 20:2

 1. She does not announce Jesus has risen, but that His Body has been taken (probably stolen)
 2. This is also true of the women with her ("we do not")
- B. John says they did not understand the Scripture yet

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes. John 20:8-10

 1. John is getting the first glimmers of faith and understanding (v8).
 2. But he states the disciples did not understand!
 3. They did not understand that the Scripture taught the Messiah would be killed, buried, and rise from the dead.
 4. They did not understand Jesus' teaching on all of this either!
 5. That is why the disciples simply returned home instead of running to tell everyone the news - they were struggling to grasp what was happening.
 6. This is a very realistic description of the journey to understanding that they all experienced!

7. They were so set in their belief that the Messiah would ride in, take the throne, and vanquish God's enemies that they missed the obvious teaching of Jesus and the Scripture - and they could not even understand why the body was gone.

C. Mary continues to struggle to understand

1. Mary is still full of grief, thinking the body has been taken, not resurrected

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." John 20:11-13

- a. Mary weeps for grief, not joy!
- b. The angels ask why she is weeping - a mild rebuke
- c. Mary still thinks someone stole the body!

2. Mary sees Jesus - but doesn't know it is Him!

Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." John 20:14-15

- a. Grief-stricken and probably in agitation, she is desperately looking around.
- b. She turns, and through her tears (and possibly with the sun blinding her eyes), she sees Jesus!
- c. But she does not know it is Him!

- d. Jesus asks the same question and another one.
- e. Mary still thinks someone stole the body!
- f. What a vivid description, so true to how we act when grief-stricken and confused!

3. Jesus calls to Mary - and she responds in faith

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). John 20:16

- a. Jesus tenderly speaks her name - and she finally understands and knows Who He is.
- b. Mary responds in her heart language of Aramaic (another vivid detail), calling Him "My Rabbi."
- c. She apparently has fallen at Jesus' feet and is clinging to Him (v17), full of joyful wonder and worship that Jesus is alive!
- d. For the first time, someone begins to tell other "He is Risen!"

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. John 20:18

1. She does not know everything - but she knows Jesus has spoken to her!
2. She doesn't know or understand everything - but she knows Jesus is alive!
3. She doesn't know or understand everything - but she starts to tell others what she does know: He is Risen!

IV. Encountering Jesus the Risen King!

- A. John wants us to know Jesus is Risen from the dead!

1. Everything in this passage points to it being real history, recording memories of actual events!

2. It is so vivid and full of small details that show it is an eyewitness testimony of the events on that morning.
3. The testimony is that Jesus is Risen from the dead!
 - a. The Body was not in the tomb any longer!
 - b. It was not grave robbers, for they would never have left the valuable cloth and spices.
 - c. It was not the disciples - they were NOT expecting the resurrection and struggled to understand what happened.
 - d. The ONLY logical conclusion from the historical data is that Jesus is Risen from the dead!
4. John wants to make the fact of the resurrection clear to us!

B. John wants us to respond in faith

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but **these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.** John 20:30-31

1. Some want to discount the Gospels as real history because the writers are not “neutral.”
2. This discounts ALL history - for no human is truly neutral, no one gives an account “from nowhere”!
3. John lays his cards on the table - he saw these things, can verify they really happened, and he wants others to encounter Jesus the Risen King and to believe in Him!
4. Easter is not about nice traditions or interesting historical observations - it is a call to respond to the historical fact that Jesus has risen from the dead and offers forgiveness and life to us!

5. Have I responded in faith to Jesus the Risen King?
 - a. We are called to make a definite decision that we believe Jesus has risen from the dead and gives salvation to us!
 - b. It is also ok to have questions and struggle to understand - Peter, John, and Mary did!
 - c. What I need is not more evidence but to hear Jesus call my name as He did to Mary!
 - d. Listen to Him calling and respond in worship!
6. For those who have encountered Jesus the Risen King - go and tell others!
 - a. Mary Magdalene is a model for us here!
 - b. When she heard Jesus the Risen King call her, she worshipped Him!
 - c. When she heard Jesus the Risen King call her, she went and told others the wonderful news that “He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!”

C. The Table of the Risen King!

1. Recite 1 Corinthians 15 confession of faith
2. Come and receive from the Risen King!

Encountering Jesus the Risen King

John 20:1-18

April 5, 2026

Communion

Philippians 3:10-11

Teaching keywords: Easter; resurrection; Gospel; salvation and deliverance; apologetics

May you know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and attaining eternal life and the resurrection from the dead. You are the blessed children of the resurrection - go forth filled with resurrection power and be a blessing! Phil. 3:10-11