



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

Volume 42

February 2022

Number 7

Evidence for the Empty Tomb

Daniel Stearsman

The truth of the empty tomb is firmly established by examining multiple lines of converging evidence. First, the plans, preparation, and prophecy of God point to the promise of an empty tomb. Roughly a thousand years before Christ came in the flesh, King David prophesied that Christ would not be abandoned to Sheol (Hades) or the holy one allowed to see corruption (Ps. 16:10). David “foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of Christ,” a truth Peter confirmed following the ascension (Acts 2:31). Moving forward, Isaiah ministered from “742 BC to after 701 BC,” and he foretold the fate of the Suffering Servant and how He would be buried in a rich man’s tomb (Isa. 53:1-12) (Brisco 141). He specified, “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth” (Isa. 53:9).

In addition to the prophetic message, Jesus promised throughout His ministry that He would rise on the third day (Mt. 16:21; Mk. 8:31; Lk. 9:22, 18:33, 24:7, 46; Jn. 2:19). His resurrection would leave the tomb empty, and at the same time, His foes not only acknowledged His promise to rise on the third day but took the claim as quite plausible (Mt. 27:40, 63). Thus, prior to His death, foreknowledge and motive were firmly established in specific claims concerning His death, burial, and resurrection.

Second, there is a mountain of physical evidence and eyewitness testimony that firmly proves His tomb empty. Consider the line of causation that eventuates in Christ’s body being placed in one specific tomb, that of Joseph of Arimathea (Isa. 53:9 cf.

Mt. 27:57). During the crucifixion, the subsequent death, and final transfer of His body, Jesus was entrusted to a Roman centurion and those with him who were keeping watch (Mt. 27:54). These Romans had intimate knowledge of the full horror and injustice that unfolded before their very eyes. They were there through the cruelty and mockery. They were there when darkness covered the earth for three hours and when the earth quaked (Mt. 27:45, 54). In fact, following Christ’s death, one of these soldiers pierced His side, bringing forth blood and water (Jn. 19:34). They possessed the full capacity to judge for themselves whether Jesus was the Christ (Mt. 27:32-44). What was their assessment? When Jesus died the centurion praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent” (Lk. 23:47)! Furthermore, after surveying the events, they swelled with awe and claimed, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mt. 27:54)!

Third, consider the chain of custody in the handling of the body of Jesus following His death. The testimony of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus is significant. Joseph was a rich man who asked Pilate for the body of Christ (Mt. 27:57). Pilate consented and Joseph wrapped the body in a clean shroud, laying it in his own new tomb and rolling a great stone to cover it (Mt. 27:59; Mk. 15:43-46; Lk. 23:50-53;



Thank You Supporters!

Due to our generous lectureship supporters, we met our total lectureship expenses of \$17,301.82! Thank you!

Jn.19:38-42). Nicodemus was present too. He brought seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes and helped bind the body in linen cloth according to burial customs (Jn.19:40-41). Subsequently, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there opposite this specific tomb (Mt. 27:61). Why are these details so important? This places at least four witnesses at the specific tomb offered by Joseph of Arimathea prior to the resurrection. Allegations that the disciples arrived at the wrong tomb following the resurrection simply will not stand. Two witnesses, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, had been there already (Mt. 27:61). These two returned to His tomb on resurrection morning (Mt. 28:1). Additionally, Mark recorded that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw precisely where Jesus was laid (Mk. 15:47). If multiple witnesses and the guard could identify Christ's specific tomb, it stands to reason that the tomb could be readily identified on resurrection morning.

Fourth, the facts concerning the Jews, Pilate, and the guard reveal what sort of measures were set in order to ensure the security of the tomb. It is significant to note the contradiction in the Jews' calling Jesus an "imposter" (a fake) on one hand, yet seeking Pilate's permission to order a guard to protect the tomb (Mt. 27:63). Why would they seek a guard? Rome had an issue with grave robbing. In fact, an inscription found in Nazareth dating

before AD 70, perhaps coming from Tiberius (AD 14-37) or Claudius (AD 41-54), forbade removing bodies (Perrodin and Hultberg 1216). However, this does not fully explain the entirety of their concern. They candidly admitted to Pilate that Jesus promised, "After three days I will rise" (Mt. 27:63). This contradiction demonstrated their concern that He just might rise.

So, they sought Pilate's help in securing the tomb (Mt. 27:63). Pilate enlisted a guard of soldiers whose mission was to "make it as secure as you can" (Mt. 27:65). Scholars differ on whether the guard was Roman or Jewish. D. A. Carson believes that the guard was Jewish due to the fact that the guard reported to the chief priests rather than Pilate (Mt. 28:11) (Carson 586). Nolland agrees, writing, "there is no evidence that any band of Roman soldiers was at the disposal of the Jewish leadership." In contrast, Leon Morris would lean toward the guard being Roman because he sees them as (1) answerable to Pilate (Mt. 28:11-14); and (2) the Jews would not need Pilate's permission to use their own guard. Regardless of whether the guard was Jewish or Roman, serious attention was given to securing and guarding the tomb.

Special Thanks To Our Generous Supporters In December 2021

Florida Churches of Christ: Apopka (Tenth Street); Auburndale (Orange Street); Bartow (Fifth Avenue); Callahan (First Coast); Center Hill; Clearwater (Central); Daytona Beach (Beville Road); Deltona; Dunnellon; Jacksonville (Normandy, Wesconnett); Kissimmee; Lakeland (North Lakeland, South Florida Avenue); New Port Richey (River Road); Plant City (Laura Street); Poinciana; St. Augustine; Stuart; Zephyrhills (Southside).

Out of State Churches of Christ: Alabama (Cold Springs, Double Springs, Shiloh); Georgia (Ridge Avenue, Forrest Park); Michigan (Grand Blanc); Ohio (Tipp City); South Carolina (Edgewood); Texas (Highland).

Individuals: M/M Rodrigue Aleandre, Donna S Anderson, M/M Blane Anderson, M/M Forest Antemesaris, M/M Jeffrey Bingle, M/M Leslie Bitting Jr., Bettye Bolding, M/M Manuel Brown, M/M Rico Brown, Ronald Burton, Annie Chambers, Jeffery Childers, M/M William A. Clayton, M/M Reginald Colton, M/M Robert A. Cooper, Carl Cooper, M/M Hollis Cress, M/M Bruce Daugherty, David M. Deal, Christopher Dean, M/M. Guy Dickinson, M/M David Dix, M/M Robert Doak, M/M John Donaldson, M/M Wayne Doran, Kathey J. Dudley, James R. Earnhardt, John Ellwood, Dale Eppley, M/M George K. French, M/M C. J. Grimes, M/M James E. Hall, M/M Kenneth Harrison, M/M Robert Jackson, Deborah Jones, M/M Rick Kenyon, Wadi Khoury, M/M Darnell Kirkland, Carla Lee, John Lewis, M/M Nathaniel McCray, Maudeann McKendree, Carol Moore, Ola Mae Navarre, Charles Paulin, Tammi D. Paye, M/M Jack Pinckert Jr., Linda J. Pinckney, M/M Vic Pratt, Katie Randle, M/M Ulysses Richardson, Roger Rosie, James W. Shearer, M/M Bobby Sheu-maker, Johnye C. Sims, M/M Earl Smith, M/M David Stearsman, Glenda Sullivan, Logan Summers, M/M Jimmy Sweeney, M/M Chad Tagtow, Ada Walling, Jessie Watson, M/M Bobby Wells, M/M Marc Wilkerson, M/M Larry Williams, Debbie Milton Winkle.

Memorials: Rembert Allen (Gloria Allen); Arlene Carr (David M. Deal); Russell and Shirley Cozort (Kevin E Cozort); Shirley Crocker (Bill Crocker); Jim Edmonson (anonymous); Newman and Mildred Kirkland (M/M Craig Mills); Mary E. "Libbie" Littleton (M/M Bobby Wells); Bruster McErrcher (anonymous); Nancy Norton (M/M Bobby Wells); George Peterson (Dorothy Peterson); Dick Schaffer (anonymous); Joyce Slaughter (Deltona church of Christ); Faith West (anonymous).

Special Contributions: Amazon Smile Donation; Cheaves Masonry and Construction, Inc.; Denis L Fontaine Foundation Inc.; Network for Good.

*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

The Harvester

Published Monthly
Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803
(863) 683-4043

Editor: Brian R. Kenyon, Director

Board of Directors

Ted Wheeler, Chairman
Brian Kenyon, Vice-Chairman
Tim Simmons, Secretary
Chad Tagtow, Treasurer

Steve Atnip Philip Lancaster
Terrance Brownlow-Dindy Walter Podein
Bruce Daugherty Ben Radford, Sr.
Barry J. Enzor Ulysses Richardson
George K. French

**Training Preachers Since
1969**

Another convincing detail appears in the seal applied to the tomb (Mt. 27:60). This seal was most likely made of clay or wax and would reveal whether the tomb had been tampered with (Arnold).

Fifth, on the first day of the week, the testimony of several witnesses at the tomb proves quite powerful. Two details must be true for the testimony concerning the empty tomb to stand. In the first place, witnesses must arrive at the right tomb. In the second place, the stone must be removed for Jesus to leave and physical evidence to be left behind. Luke 24:2 records how the stone was rolled away. Matthew recorded how an angel rolled it back and was sitting on it (Mt. 28:2).

A host of witnesses attest to the empty tomb. Matthew testified that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were at the tomb at dawn (Mt. 28:1). Mark placed Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus following His death, yet finding the tomb empty (Mk.16:1, 5). Luke confirmed women, but not specifically which women were at the tomb (Lk. 23:55; 24:1). However, he did tell how Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women told the apostles of His resurrection (Lk. 23:55; 24:1, 10). John cited Mary Magdalene being at the tomb early, while it was dark (Jn. 20:1). Her encounter with Jesus proved significant. She encountered Jesus first, following the resurrection (Jn. 20:11-18). It was Mary Magdalene who was speaking with two angels in the tomb when she turned and engaged the risen Lord (Jn. 20:12-16). Then she, along with others, informed the disciples of His resurrection and His going to Galilee (Mt. 28:7, 10; Mk. 14:28, 16:7, 10; Lk. 24:10, 22-23; Jn. 20:17-18). Additionally, some of the guard went and told the Jews what had happened (Mt. 28:11).

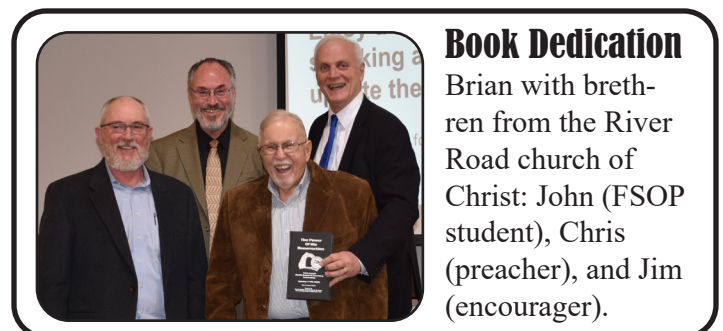
Upon hearing the news, the apostles were initially skeptical (Lk. 24:11; Mk. 16:11). Yet, those moments did not last long. Peter, Mary Magdalene, and the disciple whom Jesus loved ran to the tomb (Jn. 20:2-6; Lk. 24:11). Both Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved stooped looking in the tomb and found the linen cloths by themselves (Lk. 24:11; Jn. 20:5). Peter entered the tomb first, followed by the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn. 20:5-8). Peter specifically identified both the strips of linen cloth that were once around Jesus' body along with the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head, placed separately (Jn. 20:6-7).

Sixth, there is a multiplicity of post resurrection

appearances of Jesus establishing the tomb empty. He appeared to Peter (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5). He appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-31). He appeared to the eleven disciples in Galilee (Mt. 28:16-20), Thomas (Jn. 20:24-29), James (1 Cor. 15:7), Joseph, called Barsabbas and Matthias (Acts 1:22-26), more than five people at once (1 Cor. 15:6), Peter and the disciple Jesus loved (Jn. 21:15-21), and Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John by the Sea of Tiberias (Jn. 21:1-3). Finally, He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4-5, 17; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8) (Ankerberg and Weldon 155-156).

Seventh, following the resurrection, multiple encounters affirm that the resurrection was central to the powerful message of hope and salvation for all mankind (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:3; 3:21). What does this prove concerning conspiracy theories about the empty tomb? How does it establish the truthfulness concerning the tomb? It proves that the message of the empty tomb was not hidden in some corner (Acts 26:26). Rather, it was propagated in the open court of public opinion. Proclaimers could attempt to shoot it down, but its truth was marching on. Consider Peter's words on Pentecost following Christ's ascension. Just ten days after His ascension, Peter preached the stark contrast between David's occupied tomb that was present and "with us to this day" in Jerusalem versus Jesus' tomb that stood empty (1 Kgs. 2:10; Acts 2:29). This historical reality of the empty tomb had real world, personal application that empowers the lives of the hearers (Acts 2:37-38). Peter proclaimed that baptism saves through the resurrection (1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:38). Everlasting hope is possible through the resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3).

Lives are fundamentally transformed through the resurrection. Paul told the saints in Rome that the resurrection declared God's power (Rom. 1:4). In another place, Paul told Ephesus that God's "immeasurable greatness of ... power" toward believers is according to the great work of the resurrection and ascension (Eph. 1:20-21). When he was on trial, Paul



Book Dedication

Brian with brethren from the River Road church of Christ: John (FSOP student), Chris (preacher), and Jim (encourager).

Florida School of Preaching



1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803
fsop.net fsop@fsop.net
863-683-4043 or 800-320-9780

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Lakeland, FL
PERMIT #235

Electronic Service Requested

Please Do Not Re-send
without affixing
correct postage!

The Harvester

February 2022

Page 4

boldly proclaimed to the Jewish council that he was on trial for the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6). The reality of the empty tomb is not merely academic; it has the potential to inform our past, empower our present, and ensure our future. 🙏

Works Cited

- Ankerberg, John and John Weldon. *The Passion and the Empty Tomb: The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2005.
- Arnold, Clinton E. Zondervan *Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Brisco, T. V. *Holman Bible Atlas*. Holman Reference. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1998.
- Carson, D. A. "Matthew." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Vol. 8. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Perrodin, John, and Alan Hultberg. "Matthew." *The Apologetics Study Bible for Students*. Ed. Sean McDowell. Nashville, TN: Holman, 2017.

Special Thanks to Stephanie Kenyon and Those Who Helped with Our First Ever FSOP Lectureship Children's Program!

We are grateful for those who saw the value in having a special lectureship program for the children. Stephanie organized the project and several sacrificed their time to make sure these children were also fed the God word!

