

TRUTH & RIGHT

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THE EMPTY TOMB

“Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means,” Luke 8:1-3. The Lord’s kindness and mercy was felt throughout the entire landscape where He walked and preached. Here we see the level of gratitude on display by several women who were devoting their lives to serving Jesus. Mary Magdalene would continue to stay loyally devoted to Christ all the way to His cross and eventually His tomb.

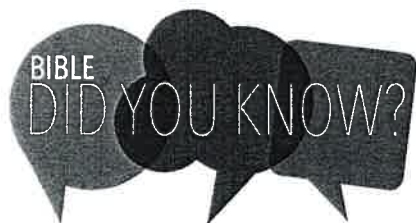
“Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb,” John 20:1. Her loyalty towards Jesus is felt even today, as she becomes one of the first key witnesses that the tomb was empty and Jesus had risen from the dead. “Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it,” Mark 16:9-11. Her testimony was not received very well, as the testimony of women was not seen to be as credible as the testimony of men. In fact, the Jewish historian Josephus says

that women weren't even permitted to serve as witnesses in a Jewish court of law. "And they remembered His words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them," Luke 24:8-11. So if the resurrection was a complete hoax and the writers were simply attempting to deceive their audience, why would they place women as the primary witnesses of the empty tomb? By far the most popular argument favoring the gospel testimony on this subject is that, in all four texts, women are listed as the initial witnesses. Given the general reluctance in the Mediterranean world at that time to accept female testimony in crucial matters, the Gospels probably would not have dubbed them as the chief witnesses unless they actually did attest to this event. Another point of evidence which supports that the tomb was empty is the fact that the enemies of Jesus even admit it. While they attempted to offer an explanation that the disciples came and stole the body, they

were not denying at all that the tomb was empty. Historian Paul Maier explains that this early Jewish anti-Christian polemic is: "Positive evidence from a hostile source. In essence, if a source admits a fact that is decidedly not in its favor, the fact is genuine." In the second century, Justin Martyr recorded that this story was still being circulated in his day. "His disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven," (Dialogue With Trypho). Tertullian, in 200, also corroborated this idea. "This is he whom his disciples secretly stole away, that it might be said he had risen again, or the gardener abstracted, that his lettuces might come to no harm from the crowds of visitants!" (De Spectaculis). There would be no need to propagate the idea that the disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb if the tomb were not empty. In its primitive form the empty tomb narrative is theologically unadorned. The story lacks later theological motifs that a late legend might be expected to contain. This suggests that the empty tomb account is early and more probably than not factual. According to William Craig the

empty tomb is credible as “it was not an apologetic device of early Christians...”. There is no significant theological or religious embellishment, no signs of legendary development, and no exaggerations. What we see is a couple women followers discovering the empty tomb and being told by someone that Jesus is no longer there. This kind of simplicity, given how crucial the empty tomb is to Christian belief, is evidence of this being a historical fact as opposed to a mythologized tale. Christianity would be debunked if someone had reported the tomb still contained the body of Jesus. One of the most powerful arguments that favors Jesus’ empty tomb is the location and events surrounding it. The gospels all agree that Jesus was buried in a tomb that was located in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place where early Christian preaching first took place, and thus subsequently led to the birth of the church. However, any Christian preaching at this very early time would run into a bit of an issue if Jesus’ tomb was not empty. Jerusalem would have been the last place that Christianity would have taken off if Jesus was still in his grave. The best explanation comes from the testimonies of the eyewitnesses themselves.

Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead, leaving an empty tomb behind. “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you,’” Mt. 28:5-7. — Daniel Rugg



***All around us we are
told of the works of God.
“The heavens are telling
of the glory of God; and
their expanse is
declaring the work of
His hands. Day to day
pours forth speech, and
night to night reveals
knowledge. There is no
speech, nor are there
words; their voice is not
heard.”***

Psalm 19:1-3

BIBLE TRIVIA

C H A L L E N G E

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. The wicked _____ when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

- a) Laugh
- b) Flee
- c) Jazzercise
- d) Plot

2. Evil men do not understand _____, but those who seek the LORD _____ understand all things.

- a) Riddles
- b) Women
- c) Fishing Metaphors
- d) Justice

3. Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is crooked though he be _____.

- a) Rich
- b) Handsome
- c) Strong
- d) Sneaky

4. He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his _____ is an abomination.

- a) Children
- b) Money
- c) Clothing
- d) Prayer

5. He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who _____ and forsakes them will find compassion.

- a) Confesses
- b) Sings
- c) Runs
- d) Forgets

6. He who robs his father or his mother and says, "It is not a transgression," is the companion of a man who _____.

- a) Cooks
- b) Stinks
- c) Sins
- d) Destroys

7. When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people _____.

- a) Die
- b) Sleep
- c) Groan
- d) Fight

8. When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or _____, and there is no rest.

- a) Runs
- b) Laughs
- c) Fights
- d) Sings

9. He who pampers his slave from childhood will in the end find him to be a _____.

- a) Sloth
- b) Enemy
- c) Son
- d) Mistake

10. A man's _____ will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.

- a) Whistle
- b) Laugh
- c) Donkey
- d) Pride

10) D, Prov. 29:23
9) C, Prov. 29:21
8) B, Prov. 29:9
7) C, Prov. 29:2

1) B, Reference: Prov. 28:1
2) D, Reference: Prov. 28:5
3) A, Reference: Prov. 28:6
4) D, Reference: Prov. 28:9
5) A, Reference: Prov. 28:13
6) D, Reference: Prov. 28:24