

ROAD TO EASTER
THE EMPTY TOMB

Monday, April 1

Reading: John 20:1-10

***John 20:1** Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. **2** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"*

Like the rest of his gospel, John's account of the resurrection contains details not given in the other gospels. All the gospels mention a group of women coming to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body early Sunday morning. This was a normal Jewish burial ritual that had been interrupted on Friday by the quickly approaching Sabbath. Every gospel lists Mary Magdalene among these women but only John mentions Mary's wrong conclusion. Seeing the empty tomb, she assumes the worst and runs to tell Peter and John that someone had stolen Jesus' body. If she had stopped to notice, she would have seen the angels who told the other women, "He is not here! He has risen!"

Mary informs Peter and John who race to the tomb and find the linen burial cloths lying in perfect condition. If someone had stolen the body like Mary thought and Jesus' enemies would claim later, the thieves would have taken the body – grave clothes and all. If they did remove the wrappings, they would not have been neat and organized. Jesus had simply passed through the grave clothes leaving an empty cocoon. He even took time to fold and place the chin cloth used to tie His mouth closed. This was NOT the scene of a grave robbery.

What does it mean that John "believed"? After all, in his next sentence he says that they had not yet understood the Scriptures and the resurrection. Perhaps John remembered Jesus' words at the Last Supper that He was "going to the Father" and believed that Jesus had simply returned to heaven. Whatever the case, Peter and John went home still not sure exactly what had happened.

LESSON ONE: "The Stone Had Been Removed From the Entrance." We have all seen "Passion Plays" that portray the angel rolling the stone away and Jesus emerging triumphantly from the tomb. However, this is not how it happened. Jesus was already gone! The angel did not move the stone to let Jesus out; the stone was moved to let people in! What Mary, Peter, and John were about to realize is that this empty tomb would change their lives. The risen Christ is the heart and power of the gospel. Has Jesus Christ changed your life? In what way has He done this?

LESSON TWO: "They Have Taken the Lord." No one was expecting the resurrection, not even Jesus' closest followers. Mary jumped to the wrong conclusion and Peter and John weren't sure what to think. This is odd because Jesus had told them all this would happen many times! They just weren't listening. It didn't fit into THEIR plan of what Messiah would do. Do we ever get confused or do the wrong thing because we are not listening to what the Spirit is trying to tell us through God's Word? When was a time you didn't listen to godly advice because it didn't fit with what you wanted? What do you need to do to be more sensitive to the Spirit's leading in your life? How can you hear and understand God's Word better?