

# Heaven's Explanation of the Empty Tomb

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[ 0 : 00 ] Bibles to the book of Mark. Mark chapter 16.

I'm sorry. Mark chapter 16. The title of my message, Heaven's Explanation of the Empty Tomb. There are a lot of explanations about why the tomb was empty or if it was empty.

That's even real. It is. We are interested in Heaven's Explanation of the Empty Tomb in Mark chapter 16 beginning in verse 1. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so that they might come and anoint Him.

That is Jesus in the tomb. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

Then looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. Then entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe, and they were amazed.

[ 1 : 23 ] And he said to them, Do not be amazed. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen.

He is not here. Behold, here is the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you to Galilee.

There you will see him just as he told you. Well, they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

They were afraid. What does religion say about Jesus Christ? Well, it depends.

It depends on what religion you ask and who you go to within each religion or sect or denomination. Muslims. Muslims believe in Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 25 ] Did you know that? They do. They do not believe that Jesus was God. Now, according to the Muslim Bible, the Quran, and according to Muslim clerics who teach from the Quran, Jesus Christ was never crucified and therefore was never raised from the dead.

I have a quote from one Sunni Muslim saying this. Muslims believe that Allah saved the Messiah from the disgrace and humiliation of crucifixion.

Okay. And then quoting from John Piper, who references this in his book, Counted Righteousness in Christ. The portion of the Quran that provides the basis for this denial of the crucifixion and resurrection says, quoting from the Quran, and for there the Jews saying, Oh, we slew the Messiah Jesus, Son of Mary, the messenger of God.

Yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him. And then Piper says that yet another Muslim witness adds, We honor Jesus more than you do.

Do we not honor him more than you do when we refuse to believe that God would permit him to suffer death on the cross? Rather, we believe that God took him to heaven.

[ 4 : 03 ] And so it goes with all false religions and cults who deny the deity of Jesus as the Son of God, and or they seek to deny or diminish his sacrificial death on the cross in his miraculous resurrection from the dead.

The world system is steeped in and defined by wicked unbelief. It's the wicked unbelief of the God of this world who blinds the minds of the unbelieving to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of Almighty God.

That is the work of the devil. So we know who's behind all of this. Now, Christian scripture, that is the Bible, hopefully the one that you have in your hands this morning, the Bible clearly teaches that by the will of God, Jesus Christ suffered being crucified.

He was buried on a Friday, and by the power of God, Jesus was raised from the dead on a Sunday morning. Scripture actually takes pains to be perfectly clear about this.

There's no ambiguity in this at all. So that even Jesus himself took time on multiple occasions to warn his disciples, to prepare his disciples about what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem as they traveled in that direction.

[ 5 : 45 ] And I would like to take a moment to show you a few of these passages in the book of Mark. So if you'll go to Mark chapter eight, look at this warning. Now, consider what we're about to read in the light of what these Muslim clerics declare and what the Quran teaches about all of this.

This is Mark chapter eight, beginning in verse 31. And he began to teach them that the son of man must. I hope your Bible uses that word at some place in that verse.

Look at that again. He began to teach them that the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. And he was stating the matter plainly, plainly. See, this is not ambiguous. This is very clear. Then how about Mark chapter nine, verses 30 and to 32?

From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know about it. For he was teaching his disciples and telling them, the son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him.

[ 7 : 13 ] And when he has been killed, he will rise three days later. But they did not understand this statement and they were afraid to ask him.

And then finally in chapter 10, verse 32. They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them, and they were amazed.

And those who followed were fearful. And again, Jesus took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to him, saying, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and will hand him over to the Gentiles.

They will mock him and spit on him and scourge him and kill him. And three days later, he will rise again.

Now, in my passage, I circled the wills. One, two, three, four, five times in three verses, this will happen.

[ 8 : 35 ] It's clear, isn't it? Three times in his many chapters, Mark records for us that Jesus took pains to pre-warn and prepare his disciples for this.

But they did not understand. They will. They'll come to an understanding, but not yet. And just after Jesus took his final Passover with his disciples, and then just before he came to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he would pray before being arrested, he said this.

If you'll look at Mark chapter 14. Mark 14, verse 26. And singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives, and Jesus said to them, You will all fall away, because it is written, I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

In other words, this is Scripture. This will come true. But after I have been raised, I will do what? I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

Now that's the promise that he made his disciples. This is going to happen to me. All of you will run away and hide. But after three days, I'm going to be raised again, and I'll go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.

[ 10 : 01 ] And that's a promise from the Lord Jesus. Friends, listen. Not only did God not rescue Jesus from being crucified, God rescued us by striking down his only son in our place and having him crucified as our substitute.

If we don't have a perfect, sinless Jesus being tortured to death on a cruel cross and then being raised again after three days, Christianity is nothing more than a sham.

And this is a big old waste of time. And we know that's not true. He is risen. He is risen indeed. In Mark 16, we have the beginning of the eyewitness accounts, the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection from the death he suffered by way of his crucifixion.

And in fact, Jesus' resurrection is proof of God's acceptance and approval of Jesus' sacrifice of himself in our place.

Friends, Jesus was condemned by God so that we can be consecrated to God. The Muslims get it very, very wrong.

[ 11 : 28 ] And we need to remember that. His resurrection is proof of God's promise to save us. So collectively, the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John highlighted particular people, specific names, individuals who lived and breathed and walked on this planet with Jesus, with one

another.

And they witnessed Jesus' crucifixion with their own eyes. They heard the sounds with their own ears. They took it into their souls. They saw him die.

They saw his hasty burial. We had, for instance, the religious leaders of Israel from the high court of the Sanhedrin, Israel's most powerful religious court.

They all stood mocking Jesus and they wanted Jesus' dead body buried in a common grave. We have soldiers of the Roman Empire whose lives hinged on doing their duty to their utmost.

Mess it up and you die. It's as simple as that. That was the motivation. We have these soldiers of Imperial Rome who mocked and beat and tortured and killed and personally verified Jesus' death.

[12:54] Then we have many women, women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, they stood at a distance watching and taking in all of these things.

Our text also mentions Mary, the mother of James the Less, or Alphaeus, who was one of the twelve disciples. Salome, the mother of James and John, and Mary Magdalene.

They are each mentioned by name as witnesses of Jesus' crucifixion, death, burial, and finally, the disciples. The disciples, especially Peter and John, were also mentioned.

And now to include our passage, we have this wonderful gospel account collectively then coming together to mention these same people as witnesses to the empty tomb.

The empty tomb. Due to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And folks, not just witnesses. But we are being shown how these people reacted to this incredible historic reality.

[14:04] So first, in our passage, Mark mentions the witness of heaven's handmaidens. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, bought spices so that they might come and anoint Jesus' body.

Very early then, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. Now these are all just facts that Mark's putting in here because he wants to convey the reality of this historical account.

They were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? And then looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

Now what Mark does in this account is he zeroes in on the women who followed Jesus as they joined together in one final, wonderful, selfless act of love for their dead Savior.

Please understand how difficult this must have been for these ladies. This was not an easy task.

Can you imagine what it would be like for them and how excruciating it would be for them to go to the tomb and go in and anoint Jesus' body?

[15:31] I'm sure they would have wept and wept. Just they were absolutely brokenhearted and crushed to their very souls. And yet selflessly and with great humility, these women are making their way in the dark very, very early in the morning as the sun's coming up to anoint Jesus' body.

This is love. This is sweet, sweet-hearted devotion that these ladies are showing for their Savior.

The Sabbath began on the Friday before, a few days before, at 6 p.m.

The Sabbath ended then on Saturday at 6 p.m. So the Jews weren't allowed to do all these different things, all these codes and rules they had to follow.

So after 6 p.m. on Saturday evening, these women bought more spices to anoint Jesus' body early on Sunday morning.

So after the Sabbath ended, these women are rushing to buy these spices before the shop closed in anticipation of going to the tomb on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body.

[16:46] Now this was in addition to what Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had done in their hasty burial of Jesus on Friday evening as they raced to beat the 6 p.m. Sabbath deadline.

Lots of stuff have been going on since Jesus died. Now I'd like for you to notice in verse 2, verse 2, a group of these women who loved and followed the Lord are hastening to the tomb to finish the job.

The first day of the week is the way that the Jews are reckoning time. Saturday is the seventh day and Sunday in Jewish time begins the first day.

So it's Sunday, the first day of the week. It's very, very early in the morning, just before the sun is coming up. They've already made their way along to do this work.

Mary Magdalene, for some reason, has kind of gotten ahead of the other two and she will be the first to discover the empty tomb.

[17:53] Verse 3 puts the cap on it all. They were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? Now, we know this was going on with these women.

We have a number of accounts in the Gospels that tell us these different details and you kind of ask yourself, what do you think was going on in their minds?

What did they expect to find? And I asked myself, as I studied this, why is it now, only now, that they're asking themselves about this great stone?

They obviously knew about it, right? So why didn't they think about it? So I think this is kind of what's going on. These two women particularly are walking along and they're huddled very close together and they're excitedly walking and they're talking and they're just chattering along at each other because they're nervous.

They're anxious about what they have to do. And then it dawns on them because Mary's apparently a little bit ahead of them. It dawns on them, hey, wait a minute. Who's going to roll away that great stone for us? Now, I'm a guy.

[19:00] I think very, very practically about these things, right? Give me the tool. And you get it done. So I'm thinking as a guy, ladies, come on. But you know what? They're all wrapped up in what they want to do for the Lord.

It's not absent-mindedness. It's just a different focus. So now it comes to them. What are we going to do about this? This is a big, big obstacle. Maybe they thought we could get some workers maybe there'll be some guys around who will help us.

Here's what they didn't know. Apparently, they didn't realize that the tomb had been ordered, sealed, with a Roman seal so that it couldn't be broken.

And if it was broken, whoever did, it would be instantly killed if they could be found. And a Roman guard was put over the tomb. I guess they didn't know that because they're worried about the stone. I'd be worried about the guys with spears. Right? But that's not in their minds. So they're on a mission to minister to a dead man.

[20:08] That's what they think. We're going to get to a tomb. We're going to a grave. And we're going to minister to a dead guy. Somebody they love very dearly. To get to his body, they need to move the giant stone that was sealing the tomb.

And in their grief and despair over the Lord's Jesus' death, these women are doing what they can and what they know in keeping with the tradition for a corpse. Jews didn't embalm.

So spices would help with the stench as the body decayed and it was a sign of great love and reverence to do this. Now I want to make a quick note for you. Whatever we say about the stone, whatever the gospels say about this great stone, Mark made a big deal to tell us that it was a great stone, a huge stone.

There's no way that these women combined could have ever budged it. Right? But I want to make a point about this. We need to understand that God did not roll that stone away from that tomb so that Jesus could get out.

He rolled the stone away from the tomb so that people could go in and look. Right? Amen. Jesus is going to appear and disappear wherever he wants.

[21:26] That stone wouldn't have kept him in that grave. There's no way. So people need to go in because they need to see. The reality of our Savior's resurrection.

Now verses 4 and 5. Looking up, they saw the stone had been rolled away although it was extremely large. Although it was extremely large.

Looking up, they saw. And then, entering the tomb, they saw. Do you see what Mark's doing here? They saw. They saw. They were there.

They know what's going on. They were eyewitnesses to these events. Mark's putting it down for us to know. Now we cut away to another scene.

Another scene in these accounts. And it's the witness of hell's hosts. Unfortunately, we need to cover this. Matthew 27 might be the best place for us to go to see this together.

[22:24] Matthew 27 beginning in verse 62. Now, on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate.

There you go. All the cronies have gotten together. These are the people who were principally responsible for Jesus being crucified. They got together in verse 62. Here's what they plotted and said.

Sir, we remember that when he, Jesus, was still alive, that deceiver said, they can't even use his name, after three days I am to rise again.

Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal him away and say to the people, he has risen from the dead and the last deception will be worse than the first.

Pilate said to them, you have a guard, go and make it as secure as you know how. See? And they went and made the grave secure and along with the guard, they set a seal on the stone.

[ 23 : 44 ] And then if you'll go to Matthew 28. Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and other Mary came to look at the grave and behold, a severe earthquake had occurred.

Now notice carefully. Let's read carefully. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

And his appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

Alright? How was the stone rolled away from the tomb? How did God accomplish that? Okay. Which of those two things actually rolled the stone away?

The earthquake or the angel? The angel of the Lord. That's right. See, we want to be careful because you say, well, an earthquake happened.

[ 24 : 51 ] A quote-unquote natural cause just happened to be an earthquake at that very moment that rolled the stone away. Now that would have been enough for me because I know who would have caused it.

But that's not what the text stops at. The text goes on and tells us this. An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

How many angels were there? Two. What does Mark say happened? An angel did this. That's all it took. Just one little angel and that stone was no problem. Now look with me if you would at Matthew 28 verse 11.

Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that happened. Now I want you to realize this is a death sentence for these men.

This would have meant instant death for these men. They failed in their mission. And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, You are to say his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.

[ 26 : 07 ] And if this should come to the governor's ears because this is a death sentence, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble. And they took the money. Of course they did.

And did as they had been instructed. Of course they did. And this story was widely spread among the Jews as it is to this day. Of course it is.

This is why we need the testimony of heaven. That is the testimony of the world. Here are the religious leaders and soldiers conspiring to cover up the truth and reality that the empty tomb was the work of Almighty God raising Jesus from the dead just as Jesus promised.

The soldiers tell their incredible story. And this is, I laughed when I first studied this. I laughed out loud so that now these corrupt leaders have the testimony of their own people as eyewitnesses. And what do they do? What do the religious leaders do? That yeah, they don't believe them. They bribe them. They don't believe them. You would just want to pray and think, all right, you killed this guy, crucified this guy.

[ 27 : 25 ] You tried to cover up everything he did. For three years, you followed him around plotting, trying to murder him. You took several opportunities. They all failed. You finally get the guy in the grave and you can't keep him there.

And you just want to believe that somehow it would click in their hearts and minds. Oh my goodness. Maybe, just maybe, he really is the guy.

But intuition can't tell us that. Our limited sinful reason can't tell us that. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to make clear to our hearts.

That's faith. That's the gift from heaven to help us grasp the reality. So what do we do for those people who continue to struggle with the reality of the empty tomb?

We pray for them and we tell them the truth in love. Because that's where we all used to be. Right? Amen. We continue to bear the testimony of this incredible story.

[ 28 : 32 ] Well, as I said, the religious leaders listened to the soldiers. They refused to believe. They wickedly concoct a false story to cover the truth. And they realized this.

My goodness. These guys were on watch. They're bringing us this story. They could have said this. All right. This is me. I'm a Roman soldier. Me and my buddy.

We're guarding the tomb and it doesn't work out. Here's what I say. All right. You punch me and I'll get up and I'll punch you. Maybe give me a little bit of a slice wound and I'll do something to you. And then we'll go tell them that a lot of them showed up and we fought and we fought like lions and we just, we couldn't handle them. And then they all got the stone and they rolled it away and then they got him and they ran off with him.

No, they told them what happened. And they still didn't believe him. They still didn't believe him. Angel, a being, lightning.

[ 29 : 31 ] And this, this all took place. Nah, we don't believe it. So here's what we have in all of this to this point. We have the world, we have the devil, and we have religious unbelief working in concert to conceal the answer to mankind's greatest need.

The hope of life in the life of Jesus who is not dead but is risen just as he said. Now, friends, who will you trust your eternal destiny to?

Will it be the testimony of the world? The world who was bribed to tell a lie? Will it be some religion which denies that Jesus is the Son of God and was raised from the dead by the power of God and even goes so far as to write in their Bible, we respect Jesus and revere Jesus more than you do. We would never allow for God to put him on a cross and allow him to die. He's not there. He's with God in heaven. And God spared him all that. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And will you stake your life on the testimony of the devil who denies the Bible's clear truth and who stands behind all of the falsehoods about the empty tomb?

[ 30 : 58 ] Or will you prayerfully and will you humbly consider the witness of heaven's herald? Verse 5, back in Mark, chapter 16.

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right wearing a white robe and they were amazed. He said to them, do not be amazed.

You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who has been crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Behold, here is the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, he's going ahead of you to Galilee. Remember, that's what he promised. There you will see him just as he told you. Well, they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had gripped them. And they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid. Heaven sent witnesses about the empty tomb that had held the body of Jesus. The question is, will you hear with the heart of faith what heaven has to say about this? Will you trust heaven or hell for what happened and for what it means for your life? Friends, your your answer to those questions means life or death for you.

The women saw two angels. Our account here in the gospel of Mark focuses on the one who did the talking. The angel Mark does that. Do you remember that there were more than two demon possessed men when Jesus hit the shore on the what was it? The eastern bank of of the Sea of Galilee?

Two of them came running down, but only one of them Mark zeroed in on. It was Legion, the one that was doing the talking. And then Jesus cast the demons into the swine. That story.

[ 32 : 52 ] Two. There were two demon possessed possessed men, but Mark only focused on one. He's doing the same thing here with the angels. Two angels. Now the one that's doing the talking is the one that he wants to account for. And it's very interesting. The angel is sitting in the empty tomb, ready, waiting to tell them the truth and help them to rightly interpret these events. See, this is what God does. God sends his truth to us. It is revealed to us. It's not discovered.

We can't take any credit for knowing the truth, for seeing the truth. God opens our eyes and speaks in love and tells us he is risen. And by faith, we grasp that truth and reality, and it transforms us into new creatures fit for heaven because of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

This is what's going on as this angel waits to help these women interpret the reality. So based on what God's messenger said, here are the facts. Fact number one. This is so fascinating to me. You are afraid.

Don't be. The angel took stock of these women and their condition. The angel is showing patience and compassion, tenderness, understanding. Amazing. Your minds are going in the wrong place.

We are here to tell you something wonderful, not something you should be afraid of hearing or believing. Fact number two.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the one they crucified. Isn't that interesting how he made that a point to say that? That's whose tomb this was. And you all know that. That's why you came here this morning.

[ 35 : 03 ] Fact number three. Fact number three. He is risen. He is not here as you expected because he is no longer a corpse. Luke said the angel asked them, why do you seek the living among the dead?

Fact number four. See. In other words, look. See for yourselves. Here's the very spot where he was when they brought him here as a dead man. Now, look, he is here no longer.

The resurrection confronted this group of women in their despair and in their hopelessness. They've come face to face with the power of God over life and over death, but they are not able to understand these events on their own. And the same can be said of the disciples.

We will talk more about another time. We're zeroing in right now on this. Notice verse seven. But go tell his disciples and Peter. Go and tell his disciples and Peter. The very last thing Peter did with Jesus was what angrily deny that he even knew the Lord. Jesus looked eyes with Peter in that final moment. That's how Peter and Jesus last saw each other. As far as the scripture lets us know. Peter in his absolute abject failure before the Lord. This is the same man who drew his sword and cut off Malchus's ear. Right. I'll die with you, Jesus. I'll never run away. I'll never forsake you.

[ 36 : 55 ] And three times the man angrily denied that he even knew the Lord. One of the gospels tell us that at that moment, their eyes locked Jesus and Peter. And I just can't imagine what that moment must have been like for him.

And so now we have go and tell the disciples and Peter. Make sure you tell Peter. The Lord's waiting for him in Galilee. So hurry up. Move like you got a purpose.

It's very good. Please remember, folks, God knows your name. He knows the hairs on your head. He knows who you are even better than you do.

So I can say to you in all love and with great caring, this is personal. And I'm so glad. Well, like these women, the disciples are full of grief.

They're full of despair. These are beaten men. Discouraged men. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is their only and greatest hope.

[ 38 : 03 ] But without God, none of these people will be able to understand what Jesus being raised from the dead means for them. So God's messenger, this angel, tells them what they need to know and believe about the empty tomb.

What God says and does is what is most important. That's why the angel tells them to go to Galilee. Go to Galilee where you will see Jesus for yourselves just as he told you.

That's right out of scripture. Just as he told you. If you'll look at with me again, Mark 14, 28. Mark 14, 28.

But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. Just as he told you.

In Luke 24, 6 through 8, we're told they remembered his words. They remembered his words. What God has said about this is what's most important.

[ 39 : 14 ] Believe God. The reason Jesus Christ of Nazareth is not in the tomb for you to see is because God has raised him from the dead.

He is alive just as God said he would be. Folks, any other explanation about the empty tomb is a lie. So we believe the Lord, don't we?

We believe the testimony of scripture, the false testimonies of the religious leaders, the false testimony of the soldiers. They all show the wicked bent of the human heart to deny what heaven says is true.

Why? Because if we acknowledge that this is all true, we acknowledge that there is someone that we need to answer to. Someone that we need to bow to.

Someone that we need to give loyalty and allegiance to beyond me. And it takes the hope of heaven, the miracle of the new birth, regeneration, for that to happen.

[ 40 : 20 ] It's amazing. I've told you before. If you want to know how powerfully we are gripped by sin, just look at what it took for God to release us from it.

And that will give you an appreciation. God's only son in perfect righteousness had to suffer to death to release us from what overwhelms us.

And this is the power of almighty God in this wonderful resurrection. The gospels give us the foundation for our belief. Just as he told you.

And that's where we camp in our understanding. Verse 8. They went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had gripped them.

And they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid. This tells us that these faithful women need God's ongoing ministry of truth and love to guide and comfort them.

[ 41 : 22 ] The fear, the trembling, the astonishment that sees them is an awe of the experience. The life-changing truth of God in Christ Jesus.

God raised Jesus from the dead. So what about that? We know that eventually they would go out and they would tell the disciples all that happened to them. And then the disciples wouldn't believe them.

That's why Peter got up and ran to the tomb to see for himself. What Mark means when he says they didn't say anything is they went straight from there to find the apostles. They didn't run around the village.

They didn't run around the town telling everybody about this. They were women with a purpose.

And they went right to the disciples and shared what was going on.

Now, folks, who? Who speaks most strongly and authoritatively into your life? Who do you believe? Who do you listen to?

[ 42 : 20 ] What are you defined by? Whose explanations of life do you believe and trust? God has told you his own personal explanation of the historical reality, in fact, of Jesus' empty tomb.

Jesus is alive. It's why we live and celebrate. We've been going through 1 Peter together. We're in chapter 2.

Listen to this. Peter believed all of this. Peter based his life on this. In a sermon to the men who murdered Jesus, he said this. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Paul also shared in this belief.

He gave his life to following the risen Jesus. And he echoed Peter saying this. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

[ 43 : 34 ] And so all we need to do is call on him. Jeff, what does that mean? It means that you come before the Lord Jesus in faith.

You trust the testimony of Scripture. And in coming to him, you bear your heart to him. From what you know now about the forgiveness that he offers, the fact that he gave his life for you as a substitute, taking on the penalty that you deserve, God laid all of your sin on Jesus on the cross and then punished him to death because death is what we all deserve for sin.

But he didn't stop there. As Jesus was raised from the grave, we celebrate new life. The promise that all who will trust in Christ will also be raised to new life and fitted for heaven for all eternity. How can that be? Well, in Jesus dying for our sins and having all of our sins placed on him and being punished to death, God also then turns to bless us by giving to us and laying on us the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ his Son and crediting to us that sinless life that Jesus lived in perfection of the law.

So when God looks at us, he sees that righteousness of his Holy Son that makes us holy and spotless and blameless and above reproach. Jesus got the raw end of the deal in being punished for our sins.

[ 45 : 04 ] We got the perfect righteousness of Jesus to stand before a holy God, holy ourselves for he is holy. That's the beautiful nature of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, how do I have that in my life? You come and bow before the Lord Jesus. What does your heart want to tell him as a result of that? Tell him. What do you want to cry out? God, forgive me. Tell him. God, I want you to make me your child. Tell him. God, please save me and forgive me for my sins. Tell him. And the promise of God is I'll hear you, I'll save you, and I'll make you a new person.

Fit for heaven because he is risen. Let's pray together. Father God in heaven, we thank you so very much for the gift of your holy son.

He is risen. He is alive. Thank you that he lives in each one of us by the miracle of regeneration.

Thank you for justifying us, for declaring us righteous before you, before all of the world, before all

of the universe, declaring that your people are righteous before you because of Christ.

[ 46 : 15 ] Thank you for all of the ways that you sanctify us. Thank you for all of the ways that you help us to be and become more and more like Jesus in the way that we speak, the way that we think, the attitudes of our hearts, the life that we live, the things that we treasure.

Thank you, Father, that while we're on this earth, you're doing your work to make us more like your son. And thank you one day, God, when we throw off this body, you will bring us to heaven and we will be with you forever.

If there's anybody here today that does not know this personal walk, relationship and forgiveness for their sins by faith in you, I pray that you would open the eyes of their heart to help them to embrace you, Father, and to know you as their Savior and their Lord.

We rejoice in you and we thank you. We sing to your glory now in Jesus' precious name. Amen.