

In coming to chapter 20, we obviously come to an important transition. In chapters 18-19, we considered our Savior's humiliation, in chapters 20-21 we will consider His exaltation. Chapter 19 ended with His burial, chapter 20 begins with His resurrection.

There's a sense in which the darkness of chapters 18-19 have ended, and the brightness of His resurrection has dawned. The long night of our Savior's suffering has given way to the glories of a new day. Thus, our theme for this morning is – The Empty Tomb – or, Jesus' Resurrection, and I want to consider it under two main-headings: (1) Historically Proved, and (2) Practically Applied.

- I. Historically Proved
- II. Practically Applied

- I. Historically Proved

1. Here I want to move through these 10 verses, placing specific focus upon the three main players—Mary, John, and Peter.
2. (1) Mary, v1—"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."
3. We learn from the other gospels, that Mary was not alone at the tomb, but she came with a group of ladies, who were also believers.
4. We further learn from the other gospels, that they came to finish the process of anointing His body for burial (Mk.16:1).
5. The fact that John only mentions Mary Magdalene, suggests that she likely was a prominent figure among the women.
6. The NT is relatively silent about Mary Magdalene—from Mk.16:9 we learn, Jesus casted from her seven demons.
7. Ever since that happened, she, along with other ladies, followed Jesus throughout His ministry, assisting Him.
8. Furthermore, we learned from Jn.19:25, that she, along with other ladies, stood near Jesus throughout His crucifixion.
9. John now informs us, that she, along with these same ladies, was the first person at the tomb, and, as we will see next week, was the first person Christ appeared to after His resurrection (v11).
10. We learn from v1 that upon noticing the stone was rolled away, she ran to Peter and John to tell them what happened.
11. (2) John—again throughout this passage, John refers to himself as the "disciple Jesus loved," underscoring two things.
12. First, humility, in that he never wanted to give himself too much attention, and secondly, amazement, I don't think he ever got over the fact that Jesus loved him.
13. From v2 we learn, that Mary feared someone (either the Jewish leaders or vandals) had relocated Jesus' body.
14. Peter and John together run to the tomb, John, likely because he was the younger of the two, arrives before Peter.
15. V4—"So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in."
16. It appears John was waiting for Peter to catch-up—it's for this reason, he merely looks into the tomb without entering.
17. (3) Peter, v6—"Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief (or the face cloth) that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself."
18. In other words, the scene they beheld, gave no indication that the body was taken, but that the body had risen.

19. This is the entire point—and I think this is why John is careful to describe the linen as folded in separate neat piles.
20. No thief would have removed the linen, but even if they did, they certainly would not have folded them neatly.
21. V8—"Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first (that is John), went in also; and he saw and believed."
22. The word rendered "saw" means "to look intently or carefully"—John carefully examined the scene in the tomb.
23. John carefully looked around the tomb, noticing that nothing was disturbed and the linen cloths are neatly folded.
24. Notice—"he saw and believed"—what did John believe? He believed that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.
25. V9—"For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead"—that is, before this this failed to rightly understand the OT Scripture.
26. The OT Scriptures foretold His resurrection in various ways—there were types and prophecies that foretold the resurrection.
27. And until this point, Peter and John, failed to rightly understand the OT Scriptures that foretold the resurrection.
28. Thus, there is a sense in which the tomb wasn't totally empty—it was empty of a body but it retained the linen.
29. In fact, James Montgomery Boice, entitled his sermon on this passage—The Not-Quite-Empty Tomb (as the linen remained).
30. Lesson 1—From Mary Magdalene we learn, remembrance of what we once were, makes a loving and bold disciple.
31. Tradition often equates Mary with the immoral woman of Luke 7—the woman Luke merely describes as a "sinner."
32. And though there is no textual evidence to make this connection, there is a sense in which she reminds me of Mary.
33. If you remember, the lady anointed Jesus' feet with oil and her tears, wiping them with her own hair—Jesus concluded—"He who has been forgiven much loves much."
34. In other words—the reason she took the position of a servant and anointed His feet with tears, is because she loved Him greatly.
35. And the reason she loved Him greatly was because she knew how much she had been forgiven—she knew what she was by nature.
36. Regardless if this lady and Mary Magdalene were the same person, they teach the same lesson—in order to love Him more and serve Him better, we must know what we were by nature, and what He's made us by grace.
37. J.C. Ryle—"In short, of all our Lord's followers on earth, none seem to have loved Him so much as Mary Magdalene. None felt that they owed so much to Christ. None felt so strongly that there was nothing too great to do for Christ. In a word, having received much, she loved much; and loving much, she did much, in order to prove the reality of her love."
38. Lesson 2—From Peter and John we learn, understanding of the truth, often comes in various stages and degrees.
39. The disciples remind us that it's possible to be a true Christian, and yet remain rather unclear on certain points.
40. Now, it's true that the twelve disciples were unique, in that, they were so close to the events they failed to see them.
41. But nevertheless they do provide this lesson—we must be careful to judge a person unsaved for lack of theological clarity.
42. This of course doesn't deny that a person must believe certain things, from the heart, if they are to be truly saved.
43. But, a truly saved person can be rather unclear on certain things, and yet, for all of that, be truly loved of God.

44. J.C. Ryle—"Surely the Christian minister has little right to complain of ignorance among his hearers, when he marks the ignorance of Peter and John, under the teaching of Christ Himself."
45. Lesson 3—From the entire passage we learn, the resurrection of our Savior, is attested to by clear historical facts.
46. Dear brethren, the Christian faith is built upon historical facts—these are things that can be historically verified.
47. Christ was born—He lived—He was arrested—He was crucified—He rose again from the dead—all historical facts.
48. There are eye-witnesses—there is the empty tomb—there are the graveclothes—and there's the faith of Peter and John.
49. These are all undeniable proofs of Jesus' resurrection—the problem is not with the evidence, but believing the evidence.
50. 1Cor.15:3-5—"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again according to the Scriptures, and He was seen by Peter, and then by the twelve."
51. Why do so many people continue to disbelieve in Jesus' resurrection? Is it because they lack clear evidence and proof?
52. No—the issue is not with the evidence but with the willingness to believe. Man does not want to believe the evidence.
53. Thus, we learn a very important point—while we can tell people about the evidence, evidence in and of itself, will never convince anyone.
54. More than lacking a knowledge of the evidence, the problem is, man by nature hates the truth the evidence verifies.
55. Thus, man needs more than mere evidence, he needs a powerful work of the Spirit to open his eyes to the evidence.

II. Practically Applied

1. Here I want to suggest three practical exhortations, taken from the fact that Christ's tomb is empty and Jesus has been raised from the dead.
2. We have seen there is historical evidence to prove the fact—Christ's tomb is empty—He is not dead but alive.
3. (1) If the tomb is empty and Jesus has been raised from the dead—Let us mark the first day of the week with joy and celebration.
4. John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, desires that every reader of His book, know what day Christ was raised.
5. Though there has been some debate with regards to the day of His crucifixion, there's no dispute about the day of His resurrection.
6. Each of the four gospel writers record our Savior's resurrection, and each of them underscore it was on the first day of the week.
7. Nowhere in the entire NT do we ever read about the second day of the week, third day of the week, fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh—but seven times we read about the first day of the week.
8. Why were all of the Biblical writers desirous to underscore this fact—because the resurrection has deep importance.
9. It's for this reason, the disciples gathered on this day to remember Him and to worship Him, from the very beginning.
10. V19—"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled."
11. We learn later, in v26, that the disciples gathered together again on the following first day of the week—on Sunday.
12. Acts 20:7—"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul continued his message until midnight."
13. Thus, here's my point—because Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week, every first day of the week is special.

14. Brethren, to put it plainly—every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday—every Sunday is to be marked by joy and celebration.
15. The Holy Spirit intentionally informs us that Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week, because He wants us to remember it.
16. (a) Because it's the day Christ was declared Lord, Rom.1:4—"He as declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead."
17. This is why John later refers to the first day of the week as "the Lord's Day"—it's the day He was enthroned as Lord.
18. Christ was openly declared victorious by His resurrection—it publically declared Him to be "the Son of God with power (authority).
19. Paul elsewhere says Christ was "vindicated by the Spirit" (1Tim.3:16)—that is, the Spirit vindicated Him in or by His resurrection.
20. This is why the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, must be marked by joy and celebration—Christ is exulted.
21. (b) Because it's the day Christ began a new creation—in the resurrection of Christ, we have the beginning of a new creation, covenant, and temple.
22. When Christ rose from the dead, He did so as the first born from the dead, the first of a new people, over a new creation.
23. Ps.118:22-24—"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes, this is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."
24. This is a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection—He would be rejected by the builders and yet become the chief cornerstone.
25. (i) What He became—"He has become the chief cornerstone—this is using imagery originally true of the Temple.
26. The Temple build by Solomon was built upon large foundation stones, with a single massive chief cornerstone.
27. It would be upon this massive stone, that the entire Temple would rest—it would all be built upon this single stone.
28. So too, David is saying, that Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone of a new and better Temple made of living stones.
29. Every single stone (every single saved person), is built upon Christ—He is the one stone upon which the church rests.
30. (ii) When He became it—"This was the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes, this is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."
31. There was a day when the LORD formally made Christ the chief cornerstone of a new temple and new covenant.
32. Peter explains this prophecy in Acts 4:11, to refer to the resurrection, the day that Christ became the chief cornerstone to a new and better temple.
33. Thus, there a sense in which, in His resurrection, Christ came out of the tomb as the "first born from the dead."
34. He came out a Head of a new people—Creator of a new creation—and the chief cornerstone to a new Temple.
35. A.W. Pink—"Most fitting was it that the Lord Jesus, as head of the new creation, should rise from the dead on the first day of the week – intimating that a new beginning had been initiated. The full requirements of the moral law had been met; the shadows of the ceremonial law had all been fulfilled; the old system, connected with man in the flesh, was ended; a new and spiritual dispensation had begun."
36. (c) Because it's the day Christ promises to be present—Christ specially and uniquely meets with His people on the Lord's Day.
37. This is course is seen in that, the first two times Christ formally meets with His disciples, was on the first day of the week.
38. Matt.18:20—"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"—He's uniquely, powerfully, and graciously present.

39. (2) If the tomb is empty and Jesus has been raised from the dead—Let us personally live in the power of His resurrection.
40. The fact that Christ's tomb is empty, provides important personal truth for every Christian who's in union with Christ.
41. We must remember—there is a true sense in which we were in union with Christ in His historical acts of redemption.
42. Let me remind you, that Christians have a threefold union with Christ—first, eternally in the covenant of redemption.
43. Secondly, historically in His historical acts of redemption—His life, death, burial, and resurrection—He represented us.
44. Thirdly, savingly by faith in time—this is when the benefits of the other unions are personally applied to our souls.
45. Perhaps I can put it like this—in eternal past there was power planned, in His historical acts there was power purchased, and then in time, when we believe there is power personally applied.
46. Thus, just as Christ raised in newness of life, so too, there's power to live in newness of life afforded to every believer.
47. Phil.3:10—"(1) that I may know Him and (2) the power of His resurrection, and (3) the fellowship of His sufferings (Eph.1:19-21)."
48. Paul desired to know Christ more intimately, know the power of His resurrection more effectively, and share in His sufferings more faithfully.
49. Thus, the question becomes—What exactly did Paul mean when he said, he desired to know more of the power of Christ's resurrection?
50. Well, let me suggest rather simply, Paul desired to know in his soul and life, the power that comes from His resurrection.
51. In Christ's redemptive work, including His resurrection, there is purchased for every Christian, power to live a new life.
52. (a) Power to trust Christ—that is, power to trust Christ through the most difficult times, even when all that's around us seeks to hinder us.
53. (b) Power to love Christ—that is, power to love Christ supremely, more than we love any other thing or person.
54. (c) Power to obey Christ—that is, power to walk in His commandments, even though it means we walk contrary to the world.
55. Dear brethren, Christ isn't dead but alive—and because of that there's power to be had from His hands to live in newness of life.
56. We must never live as if Christ is dead—a dead Savior is unable to assist His people—but a living Savior can.
57. This is what the empty tomb says to us, as Christians, it says Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God.
58. And in Him there is power to live a holy and pure life—a life characterized by trusting, loving, and obeying Christ.
59. (3) If the tomb is empty and Jesus had been raised from the dead—Let us see in His resurrection our future bodily resurrection.
60. Dear brethren, just as certain as Christ Himself was raised from the dead, so shall every person in union with Him.
61. Did the Head rise bodily and glorious from the dead? Then every member of His body shall rise in the same way.
62. Perhaps I can put it this way—Christ's empty tomb ensures that the tombs of His people shall be empty one day.
63. Jn.14:19—"Because I live, you will live also"—that is, because I shall be raised from the dead, you too shall be raised.
64. This is in part what the resurrection says to every believer—It's because His tomb is empty, yours too shall be empty.