

# Encounters with Christ

Week 10 — **At the Tomb** — Mark 16:1-20; John 20:10-18;  
Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-12

## Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

*“I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:17b-19*

**Begin...** by familiarizing yourself with the text. Read the passage two times.

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

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Record in detail what you learn about the woman who annointed Jesus.

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Record any other questions or thoughts you have about the text. Are there parts you don't understand? What spoke to you the most?

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## Memory Verse for the Week...

*1 Corinthians 15:20-21*

*Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.*

## Learning from Mary

Through Mary Magdalene's life, we not only learn what Christ can do for us, but what we can do for him. His great love and compassion toward Mary completely changed her life and led her to become a faithful, sacrificial follower. So grateful for her deliverance, Mary practiced her faith by following Jesus and ministering to him and his disciples out of her financial means. Her gratitude and love manifested itself in her devotion to Christ.

## Not a woman of ill repute

While many equate Mary Magdalene with the woman of Luke 7:37 "which was a sinner" or the woman caught in adultery in John 8:3, there is **not the slightest evidence** in the gospel narratives or in the writings of the early church fathers to support the claim that Mary Magdalene had ever been a woman of ill repute.

## The Empty Tomb

Consider the following responses to those who are skeptical of the empty tomb and the resurrection...

**The Jerusalem Factor.** Since Jesus was publicly executed and buried in Jerusalem, it would have been impossible for Christianity to begin in Jerusalem while the body was still in the tomb. Christ's enemies in the Jewish leadership and Roman government would only have to exhume the corpse and publicly display it for the hoax of the empty tomb to be shattered.

**The Jewish Response.** Rather than point to an occupied tomb, the Jewish leadership accused Christ's disciples of stealing his body. Wouldn't this strategy seem to establish that there was, in fact, an empty tomb and a missing body?¹

**The Women's Testimony.** In all four Gospel accounts of the empty tomb, **women are listed as the primary witnesses.** This would be an odd invention, since in both Jewish and Roman cultures women were not esteemed and their testimony was not admissible.

"When you understand the role of women in first-century Jewish society, what's really extraordinary is

## A closer look...

1. Read Luke 8:1-3. What do we learn about Mary Magdalene from these verses?

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2. What do you think life might have been like for Mary before she met Jesus?

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3. How was Mary's life changed as a result of her encounter with Jesus?

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4. Mary Magdalene is mentioned by name 13 times in the Gospels. Note what the following verses say about her:

a. Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25 \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47 \_\_\_\_\_

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c. Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1 \_\_\_\_\_

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d. John 20:10-18; Mark 16:9 \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What do the above verses say about her relationship with Jesus?

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6. In the following accounts, who did the resurrected Jesus appear to?

Matthew 28:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 16:9 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:10-18 \_\_\_\_\_

7. In John's account of the empty tomb (20:10-11), the disciples went back to their homes after discovering that the tomb was empty, but Mary stayed behind crying. Why do you think she did this? What do you think was going through her mind?

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8. In John's account, Jesus told Mary not to "hold on" to him or "cling" to him. However, in Matthew's account, when Jesus appeared to the two women on their way back to the disciples, the women grasped his feet and worshiped him. He did not prevent them from touching him. How do you account for the two different responses?

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9. Read "The Empty Tomb"—especially "The Women's Testimony" in the sidebar. Jot down some of your thoughts on this.

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10. It was no accident that it was women that Jesus appeared to first after his resurrection. It was his choice. He could have gone right to the disciples. Why do you think that he did appear to the women first instead of the disciples?

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11. Meditate for a moment on the ways Christ's death and resurrection have influenced your own life. How are you different because of the events Mary Magdalene witnessed on those days?

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12. Mary Magdalene owed much, gave much, loved much and served much. She is a wonderful example of a woman whose life was poured out in response to God's extravagant grace in her life. How do we respond to Jesus' grace in our lives?

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that this empty tomb story should feature women as the discoverers of the empty tomb in the first place. Women were on a very low rung of the social ladder in first-century Palestine. There are old rabbinical sayings that said, 'Let the words of Law be burned rather than delivered to women' and 'blessed is he whose children are male, but woe to him whose children are female.' Women's testimony was regarded as so worthless that they weren't even allowed to serve as legal witnesses in a Jewish court of Law. In light of this, it's absolutely remarkable that the chief witnesses to the empty tomb are these women... Any later legendary account would have certainly portrayed male disciples as discovering the tomb— Peter or John, for example. The fact that women are the first witnesses to the empty tomb is most plausibly explained by the reality that—like it or not—they were the discoverers of the empty tomb! This shows that the Gospel writers faithfully recorded what happened, even if it was embarrassing. This bespeaks the historicity of this tradition rather than its legendary status."<sup>2</sup>

**Endnotes**

1. Historical sources: Matthew, Justin, Tertullian.
2. Dr. William Lane Craig, quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case For Christ*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, 293.

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