

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 333

Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21

Verses: John 20:1-10

Topic: The Riddle Of The Empty Tomb

Date: Wednesday 15th September 2004

Write To The Author: John Edmiston – johned@aibi.ph

Instructions for subscribing and unsubscribing are at the bottom of this email.

NOTE: The previous Eternity-DBS studies on John (John 12-17, John 17, & John 18&19) are now available as ebooks at: <http://www.aibi.ph/eternity/>
The ebooks are zip files, and are available in both Word & PDF format. The ebooks are free and take less than 2 minutes each to download using dial-up.

John 20:1-10 MKJV The first of the sabbaths Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, darkness still being *on it*, and *she* saw the stone taken away from the tomb. (2) Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him. (3) Therefore Peter and that other disciple went forth and came to the tomb. (4) So they both ran together. And the other disciple outran Peter and came first to the tomb. (5) And stooping down he saw the linens lying, yet he did not go in. (6) Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. And he saw the linens lying *there*. (7) And the grave-cloth that was on His head *was* not lying with the linens, but was wrapped up in one place by itself. (8) Therefore, then, that other disciple also went in, the *one* who came first to the tomb. And he saw and believed. (9) For as yet they did not know the Scripture that He must rise again from *the* dead. (10) Then the disciples went away again to themselves.

As a young boy I used to devour Enid Blyton's children's novels about the Secret Seven and the Famous Five. The kids would discover a treasure or find out about a jewel robbery and solve the mystery. There was always much discussion among the heroes about the significance of events, or what this clue or that clue meant, and the kids were all firm friends. Today's verses have that same air of puzzled friends working together to solve a big mystery that they know is very important. So we will call it: The Riddle Of The Empty Tomb.

First come the girls who discover the mystery – Jesus is not there, the tomb is empty. So they run back and tell the boys, who acting just like boys, don't believe them - then have a foot race to see who can get there first. John, the youngest disciple, wins over Big Peter.

Mary's dramatic opening line: "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." - would have galvanized everyone into action. They ran with pounding adrenalin and then saw an odd sight
- neatly folded grave clothes. If the soldiers or grave robbers had stolen the body they would hardly have removed the sticky myrrh and aloe soaked grave clothes and neatly folded up all the linen wrappings. They would simply pick up Jesus body, grave clothes and all and moved Him. Or they would tear off the grave clothes and

leave a mess behind. There they were in two neat piles – one of the wrappings, and another of the face cloth. As far as I can make out there seem to be three different sets of cloths – a main shroud mentioned in Mark, a large linen sheet. Underneath this would have been wrappings going around the body with ointment between the layers of the wrappings. Then another wrapping seems to have gone over the head. The shroud would have covered them all. After reading a few books I think, on balance of the evidence, that the Shroud of Turin may well be the burial cloth of Jesus.

Anyway, the mystery at this point has two components: Who moved the stone? (Mark 16:3) And John's implied question - Who removed the grave clothes and folded them? John does not mention the stone or the angel but focuses on the piles of cloths because they are what caused him to believe. This was done not by an enemy – who would have scattered things, but by a friend who carefully put them by. The tomb would have smelled of myrrh. And the question would have hung in the air:- Who did this? And why? Why remove the wrappings? What would anyone want with a beaten and crucified human body? The Jews wanted Jesus sealed up and so did the Romans. Where did the guard go? And who dared to break the Roman seal? This was unusual, even supernatural, an X-files moment. There are times when something “normal” like neatly folded grave clothes can be the spookiest thing of all. Like coming back home and seeing your husband smoking his pipe when you were certain he was killed in a plane crash. Normal can be shocking.

“And he saw and believed.” John saw the grave cloths and somehow knew that Jesus was up, and His Spirit was about and things were happening again, just like before. John, who was particularly close to Jesus, knew, in his inner being, that He was no longer dead. The sort of things that Jesus did, were heaping again, it had to be Him!

“For as yet they did not know the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead.” The resurrection of the Messiah is quite hidden in the Old Testament and it took Jesus' teaching session on the Emmaus Road later that day to make things plain to them. Isaiah 53:10, Job (Job 14:13-15; Job 19:25-29), a few Psalms (Psalm 17:15; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 49:15; Psalm 73:24,) and Daniel 12:2 may be among the Scriptures that Jesus used.

“Then the disciples went away again to themselves.” They went back to the group and to their own reflections and puzzled over these things. Finally reports of Jesus' appearance, and His standing in their midst, convinced them of the truth of the matter. Jesus always taught His disciples to have what I call a “verifiable faith”. A faith based on personal experience or on the testimony of two or three reliable witnesses.

Philosophers call this “inter-subjective testability” – is that a number of subjects (people) can, at least in theory, test the truth or falsity of the proposition. If I say: “there is now water in the dry creek-bed” then a number of folk can go and check and verify that it is so. However if I say: “Last night I dreamt of pink elephants in white tutus” – that is untestable. No one can say whether that is true or false. That is why

the Scriptures tell us not to rely too much on dreams and visions (Colossians 2:8 following).

The empty tomb was verified by a number of witnesses. The post-resurrection sightings were seen by over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:5,6) thus establishing these claims - and the body of Jesus was never produced by the Jews. The key points of the Christian faith are inter-subjectively testable – which is why there are four gospels not just one! We have a faith that checks out when examined by historians, archaeologists and linguists. The excellent Evidence That Demands A Verdict series by Josh McDowell is very helpful in this regard.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

Eternity DBS web-site: <http://www.aibi.ph/eternity/>

We are updating the archives. You will find many past articles being added to the website above.

You are receiving this email because you either subscribed on the website, or sent an email to the subscribe address. We do not subscribe people without their consent.

To subscribe - send a blank email to:

eternity-dbs-subscribe@strategicnetwork.org

To unsubscribe - send a blank email to:

eternity-dbs-unsubscribe@strategicnetwork.org

The Asian Internet Bible Institute offers free non-formal bible and ministry training and has free Christian ebooks and many articles and resources. You can find it online at: <http://www.aibi.ph/>

The laborer deserves his hire: To support John & Minda Edmiston and their missionary work in Asia go to: <http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/donate.htm>