

John

My name is John and I must tell you about the day that changed my whole life... actually the day that changed literally everything! You see, it was the day that death was defeated. Think of it! Death was defeated! But, of course, I did not always know that. In fact, for a while it seemed that death was the victor. But let me tell about it as it actually happened.

I'll never forget the chaos when the women burst in to the place we were staying. Someone was saying he was alive, another that his body had been stolen. Then Peter, in his typical manner, threw up his hands and said, "Come on, John, you can't get a straight story from a bunch of women. We'll have to go over ourselves and find out for sure what's going on."

We started off walking kind of slowly. Pete kept on grumbling about having a lot better things to do than running all over the city checking out the wild stories of a bunch of hysterical females. I was just about to say that we really ought to be a little more respectful of people's mothers, when Peter started to jog. "Hurry," he said, "If they did steal the body, maybe we can get there before the clues are all messed up." Suddenly he was running. I hesitated. Then it hit me that we were probably both thinking the same thing. It might really be true! He might be alive!

Peter had quite a jump on me but he's no gazelle. I took off and passed him in no time flat. I was dodging little old ladies and small children, donkeys and sheep dogs as I ran down the path. For all I know, Peter might have knocked them all over.

When I got to the tomb, I can't tell you what I expected to see, but I was absolutely stunned. It did not look like the work of grave robbers. There were the linen burial clothes, arranged as if Jesus had slipped out without disturbing the shape. They actually looked like an empty shell – or a cocoon. The head covering had been rolled up and laid on another part of the shelf, as you might do to make your room look tidy. I was standing in the door trying to figure out why criminals, sneaking in to do their dirty work under the nose of a detachment of Roman soldiers would take the time, when Peter caught up with me and barreled right in to the tomb. I thought he was going to crack the rock on the other side, but he stumbled to a halt and stared at what I had just seen.

Then I came in, too, and looked again. It was clear that we were not seeing the evidence of any natural event. A miracle had taken place!

The only way Jesus' body could have gotten out of those grave clothes without disturbing them was like an angel, disappearing there and reappearing somewhere else. I mean, there were blood stains on the side, where he had been pierced, that stuck the rolls together... so that they could not have been unrolled and rolled back. It was like an unbroken seal to prove the miracle, just like the soldiers surrounding the tomb were there to prove that no human being could have gotten in from the outside.

Then, seeing the head cloth again, I suddenly realized that it was exactly as Jesus always rolled his pillow when we had been sleeping in the fields. I remembered all the times we awoke and discovered that Jesus had gotten up first, gone apart for prayer and come back to start breakfast. It was as if he were now saying to those of us who knew him well, "I'm up before you and I'll see you in a little while."

Peter burst out of the tomb, and we walked fast back to the place where the others were staying. My life had been so disordered by the events of the previous few days that I was just trying to figure out how this changed things. Would we see Jesus again or just see these signs? Who would tell us what to do next? Was I still responsible for Mary, as Jesus had told me from the cross?

Then I noticed Peter's face. He looked like someone in pain and I realized that he wasn't sure he wanted to see Jesus again. It was enough to live with the memory of denying Jesus to that crowd at the high priest's house, but to have to face again the one he had failed... especially after so boldly promising to follow him even to death... I think Peter would have gladly been a martyr right then and there.

But despite our very different emotional reactions, we both knew that the truth was unshakable, Jesus was alive! Jesus IS alive!

[walking into congregation] He is alive! Jesus is really alive! Do you realize what this means? This changes everything! Spread the word. He is alive! Tell everyone, He is alive.

Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20