

Title: Come and See**[Slide 1]****Text: Matthew 27:57-28:10****Eyewitnesses****Dawn, Easter morning:**

Matthew tells us that as the eastern sky began to brighten on the Sunday morning after Passover several women walked out through the northern gate of Jerusalem and down into an abandoned quarry that had been repurposed as a garden and cemetery. He names two of the women: Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary.

Their mission was simple:

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Matthew 28:1 NIV

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

Eyewitnesses to Jesus' death:

That last little phrase is the key to the story that unfolds on Easter morning: "*to look at the tomb.*" The reason: Mary Magdalene and the "other" Mary were to become *eyewitnesses* to the greatest event that has ever happened on Planet Earth!

To understand their significance as eyewitnesses, we have to backtrack to Friday afternoon. It was then, not very far from the tomb in the garden, that they witnessed the death of their rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth. They had followed Him to Calvary, watched as He was nailed to the cross, and maintained vigil until He died. Matthew makes sure that we know exactly who they were:

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Matthew 27:55-56 NIV

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Eyewitnesses to Jesus' burial:

Not only were they eyewitnesses to Jesus' death; they were also eyewitnesses to Jesus' burial. Matthew tells us that after Jesus died, a wealthy disciple named Joseph of Arimathea asked the Roman governor, Pilate, for permission to bury Jesus' body.

The body of Jesus belonged to the state. Pilate could do with it as he pleased. The normal practice was to throw the corpse of a condemned criminal into a common, unmarked grave. But in this case Pilate made an exception. He granted Joseph's request and gave the order that Jesus' body be turned over to him. Rome had determined that Jesus would die. Rome now determined how and where He would be buried.

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Matthew writes:

Matthew 27:59-60 NIV

Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Joseph's rock-cut tomb was typical of the tombs of wealthy people of the time. It consisted of a low door which led to a chamber cut out of solid rock. In this chamber was a shelf upon which the body of the deceased was placed until it had completely decomposed. Then, the deceased's bones were gathered up and placed in a stone box. The boxes were put in niches along the walls of the tomb. But in this case, the tomb had never been used; there were no bodies and no bones inside. Jesus' body alone would lie in this tomb until Easter morning.

And all the while, Matthew tells us:

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Matthew 27:61 NIV

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Armed guards!

Matthew adds one more detail to the story of the burial of Jesus. He tells us that the chief priests and Pharisees also came to Pilate the next day requesting that Pilate place an armed guard at the tomb to prevent Jesus' disciples from stealing the body and concocting a phony resurrection story. Once again, Pilate consented. The dignitaries came to Joseph's tomb, checked to make sure the body was inside, rolled the stone back in place and put a seal on it. Armed guards took their stations to keep the body from being stolen.

We know *when* Jesus was buried. We know *how and where* He was buried. We know that His body was still in the tomb Saturday morning. We know that it was under armed guard until Easter morning. The empire which had put Jesus to death had ordered the *how, when and where* of Jesus' funeral.

Come and See**The angel of the Lord:**

So just what do you think Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were thinking would happen when they got to the tomb? Matthew tells us that they went to "look at the tomb." No expectations of any supernatural event. No talk of resurrection. Mark tells us they brought spices to complete Jesus' funeral, if only they could get inside the tomb!

Then Heaven showed up:

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Matthew 28:2-4 NIV

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

An angel of the Lord had announced Jesus' divine conception to another Joseph. Now an angel of the Lord was about to declare His rebirth to two other Mary's!

Come and See!

The angel had a simple message for the women:

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Matthew 28:5-6 NIV

"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."

The funeral plans were canceled. Jesus was alive! Come, see for yourself!

And there were no better eyewitnesses than the two Mary's. They had been present for every key moment, from Friday afternoon until Easter morning. They knew, they saw, the whole story. If you were going to choose witnesses to something utterly unimaginable, who better than Mary Magdalene and the other Mary?

Unlikely witnesses:

What makes them even more credible as witnesses is the fact that in Jewish society of that time *women could not testify in a trial*. That means that no one would make up a story as daring as the story of the resurrection of Jesus, *and then make two women the star witnesses – eyewitnesses!*

And Matthew makes sure that we know there were at least *two witnesses*. The scripture required the testimony of two or three witnesses to confirm a matter.

Go and Tell

Go and tell:

But the angel wasn't finished. He went on to say:

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Matthew 28:7 NIV

"Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

Come and see. Go and tell. That is the work of a true eyewitness. These two women were given the task of informing the 11 remaining disciples. Everything rested on their eyewitness testimony. They were to tell the disciples how they, too, could become eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

The risen Lord:

Moments later the angel's words were confirmed by none other than Jesus Himself:

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Matthew 28:8-10 NIV

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Go and tell. First you *come and see*. Then you *go and tell*.

Just like us!

When the disciples did gather in Galilee, Jesus came to them. Matthew tells us:

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Matthew 28:17-20 NIV

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Come and see: They saw Jesus for themselves. They worked through their own doubts and fears. Then Jesus sent them out on a mission: Go and tell.

In a sense, it's the same today. First, we come and see. It doesn't matter whether or not we see ourselves as qualified witnesses. We are witnesses to *our story and our encounter with Jesus*. He comes to us. He reveals Himself. He heals us. He sets us free. We see for ourselves just how real He is.

Then He says: Go and tell. Don't argue or try to convince others. Just tell them what you have seen. Share what Jesus has done for you.

And best of all, know that He is right here beside you every step of the way!