



*The Rock is a Youth
Ministry of Ascension
Lutheran Church*

The Case of the Open Tomb

Based on Matthew 28:1-15

Mark 16:1-13

Luke 24:1-32

John 20:1-18

Perry:	Toby
Mary Maggie:	Allee
Judge Wopner:	Michael
Bailiff:	Johannes
Prosecution:	Ryan
Mary MOJA:	Lauren
Salome:	Sandra
Joanna:	Annee
Peter:	Zachary
John:	Matt
Stan Laurel:	Sam
Oliver Hardy:	Chandler
Cleopas:	Oliver
Anno:	Nate
Reader:	Emily

Setting: *Perry, a chocolate bunny factory worker, sits in his living room after a hard day's work, glued to a Perry Mason & People's Court Marathon running on Court TV. His wife enters to tell him to go to bed so he doesn't over sleep the Easter Sunrise Service. He will fall asleep and imagine the ultimate courtroom drama based upon the Resurrection Stories of the Bible.*

Reader: *Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!
– Luke 24:31*

April 4, 2010

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The Case of the Open Tomb

(Click to play Perry Mason Theme for up to about 1:06 minute.)

Mary Maggie: Perry, are you still in there watching TV? Come to bed!

Perry: But Maggie, after a hard day at the factory, I just need a little time to relax. They've been running us ragged in the buildup to Easter!

Mary Maggie: Well that's what you get for working at the ACME Chocolate Bunny Factory this time of year.

Perry: You know, cupcake, it's funny. We'll be working 80-hour weeks, and then POW, come mid April...it just drops off...I mean to like nothing for about 9 months.

Mary Maggie: Hmm...go figure, Sherlock. Well, anyway, come to bed. The Youth Group is leading the Sunrise Service in the morning, and I don't want to be late...again. And I don't want you dozing off in the service!

Perry: Muffin, that would never happen. But I just can't come to bed yet! Court TV is running this great Marathon of classic old Perry Mason episodes run side by side with the best of Judge Wopner on "The People's Court". Just let me watch a little more.

Mary Maggie: Perry Mason? Judge Wopner? Is that what your watching?

Perry: Hey, Perry Mason is inspiring me. Why I might just quit this job making chocolate bunnies and become a high-power defense attorney like ol' Perry Mason.

Mary Maggie: All right, Ironside, you stay right there in that chair, but I'm hitting the sack. Good night, dreamer.

Perry: Good night. *(To audience.)* Dreamer? You know I kind of like the thought of that. Imagine me, Defense Attorney Perry Hackenbush, in the trial of the century—who knows, maybe the trial of all history? *(Dream music as Perry falls asleep and courtroom appears.)*

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- Bailiff: All rise for the honorable Judge Wopner. (*Judge enters room and takes seat.*)
- Judge: Please be seated. We are hearing the case of the State of Israel vs. the Gang of 11. Prosecution, state your case.
- Prosecution: Your honor, the state will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Simon Peter and his brother Andrew; James and John, sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; and Simon the Zealot—hereby known as the Gang of 11—conspired to rob the grave of one Jesus of Nazareth, stealing his body, and disrupting history with fanciful tales of resurrection from the dead.
- Judge: Council for the defense, how do you plead? Counsel! Wake up.
- Perry: (*Perry wakes up.*) Oh, oh...excuse me, your honor. Not guilty, your honor.
- Judge: (*To prosecution.*) Very well, call your first witness, counsel.
- Prosecution: Your honor, I'd like to call Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Silome to the stand.
- Perry: Women! I object. People in 1st Century Palestine wouldn't waste their time with the testimony of women.
- Judge: Objection over-ruled.
- Bailiff: Will the four women come forward? (*Women move to stand.*) State your names.
- Mary Maggie: Mary of Magdala, also known as Mary Magdalene.
- Mary MOJA: Mary, the mother of James, wife of Alphaeus.
- Joanna: Joanna, the wife of Chuz, the steward of Herod Agrippa.

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Salome: Salome, the wife of Zebedee, mother to James and John. You know, they are good Jewish boys. They'd never get in trouble. Why at one point, the Lord himself considered sitting them on his left hand and right hand...

John: (*Calling out to her from table.*) Mother! Stop it. You're embarrassing us again.

Salome: Very well. What's a mother to do? She only wants the best for her boys.

Bailiff: (*Slaps his head with hand.*) Oy, it's going to be a long day. Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Women: Yes.

Prosecution: So tell me Mary, what were you doing in the early hours of April 4?

Both Mary's: Well, it all started the night before...

Prosecution: I'm sorry. So many Marys. Mary Magdalene.

Mary Maggie: As we were saying, we went out and purchased burial spices so we could anoint Jesus' body.

Prosecution: I see...to embalm it?

Mary MOJA: No, to keep the stench down. It had been three days you know.

Prosecution: I see.

Salome: Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, we went to the tomb.

Joanna: On the way we were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

Prosecution: And it would take many men—say, maybe, eleven—to roll the stone away. (*To Defense.*) Your

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witness, council. (*Perry walks to the stand.*)

Perry: So Salome, what happened next?

Salome: Well, when we arrived, at the tomb, we looked up and saw that the stone had already been rolled aside. That's good I thought. Once less thing.

Mary Maggie: When we entered the tomb, we saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side.

Perry: Aha, one of Jesus' disciples, no doubt.

Mary Maggie: One of the disciples? Ha!! Are you kidding? The disciples were sawing logs.

Perry: But you said "a young man" was still there. Can you point to that young man in this room?

Salome: Take the beans out of your ears, counsel. She said "clothed in white." And we're talkin' "Pat Boone" white. Not these types of men (*points at disciples, they look at each other, and sniff their arm pits*). Now my boys may be nice, but they're fishermen like their father Zebedee—bless his heart—and they never could keep a tunic white. Not like that!

Perry: So, you would describe this young man's robe as Woolite white?

Joanna: More like "bleached from being in the presence of God" White.

Perry: Not exactly the attire of one of the eleven. So how did you react?

Mary Maggie: We were shocked, but the angel said...

Perry: Hold it. Did you say "angel"?

Mary MOJA: You still think he was a fisherman? No, he was an angel, and he says, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead!"

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Mary Maggie: He said, "Look, this is where they laid his body." And he points to an area where there are only grave clothes lying around.

Perry: Do any of the rest of you remember anything else Pat Boone, I mean, the angel, I mean the "young man", said?

Joanna: He scolded us. He said "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He is risen from the dead!"

Perry: *(Addresses the congregation.)* Did you hear that. Risen from the dead! *(To prosecutor.)* No further questions, your honor.

Judge: Prosecution, any further questions for the witnesses?

Prosecution: Yes, your honor. Joanna, the Pat Boone look-alike said "Risen from the dead?"

Joanna: That's right. Then he said "Remember what he told you back in Galilee..."

Prosecution: Aha! *(Raises his hand, then looks puzzled.)* Hold it. He who?

Joanna: The Lord, Jesus...

Prosecution: The dead man?

Salome: I'm telling you, the Angel said he wasn't dead. Then the angel preached the first Easter sermon. He reminded us Jesus had told us that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.

Prosecution: You mean your friend Jesus made all those fantastic predictions, and you forgot? What, do you people have attention deficit disorder?

Joanna: You know, it sounds crazy now, but we had sort of created Jesus in our image. Remember, we were all

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expecting Jesus to march into Jerusalem, throw out the Romans, and establish an earthly kingdom with his closest friends serving in his cabinet and various ministries.

- Salome: *(Big smile.)* With my boys, James on his left hand, and John on his right. *(Everyone looks at her. She shrugs.)* Hey, what can I say, once a Jewish mother, always a Jewish mother.
- Joanna: And Judas probably had his eyes on the secretary of Treasury, Peter the Press Secretary, and Andrew the Minister of Fisheries.
- Prosecution: But it didn't work out so well, now did it?
- Mary Maggie: Wrong! Really, it worked out even better! Jesus now reigns for all eternity!
- Prosecution: So what else did the angel say?
- Salome: Then he says, "Now go and tell his disciples, INCLUDING PETER, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."
- Prosecution: Aha, so Peter--the one they call "Rocky"--was the ringleader of the disciples.
- Salome: Peter? No, why just three days earlier he denied even knowing Jesus.
- Mary Maggie: But it was SO like the Lord to do that! To have the angel single out Peter—to call him by name—and let him know that he was still one of the gang in spite of his denying the Lord. He did that to me too!
- Prosecution: Explain, please.
- Mary Maggie: Well, later on, after I'd returned to the grave, I had an encounter with Jesus.
- Prosecution: The dead man, again?

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- Mary Maggie: No—the risen Lord Jesus. Only I didn't know it was him.
- Prosecution: (*Sarcastically.*) Well, I suppose that's understandable. After all, two days without sleep, a severe beating, a crucifixion, and three days dead in a grave, he probably wasn't easy to recognize.
- Mary Maggie: No, that's just it. He was very easy to recognize, only I was unable to see him for who he was.
- Prosecution: Ah, you're starting to lose me. (*To defense.*) Your witness, counsel. (*Perry walks to stand.*)
- Perry: So, let's get this straight. You actually saw the dead man after he had risen from the dead?
- Mary Maggie: Well, like I said, after we'd gotten Peter and John to check out the empty grave, they left, and I was there alone. So I looked in again, and this time there were two angels
- Perry: Another Pat Boone?
- Mary Maggie: No, more like Frankie Avalon in "Grease."
- Perry: Of course, what was I thinking?
- Mary Maggie: And the angels said "Dear woman, why are you crying?"
- Perry: And you said what?
- Mary Maggie: I said "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have put him."
- Prosecution: Aha! They—the disciples! Are you, in fact, admitting the disciples stole the body?
- Perry: I object, your honor. That comment by the prosecution is out of order.
- Judge: The jury should disregard the prosecution's comment.

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- Perry: Mary Magdalene, please tell us who you meant by "they" in the phrase "they have taken him."
- Mary Maggie: Not the disciples. His enemies. Those who crucified him. I was so distraught that they apparently couldn't even leave him alone in death.
- Perry: So you are quite sure the disciples hadn't moved the body?
- Mary Maggie: Like we said, they slept in that first Easter morning.
- Perry: Not into sunrise services, huh?
- Salome: No, only if the fish were biting. You got it.
- Perry: *(To Prosecutor.)* Counsel, your witness. *(Prosecutor steps up.)*
- Prosecutor: So, what happened after you spoke with the angel in the tomb?
- Mary Maggie: Well, I turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but I didn't recognize him. I thought it was a gardener. And he said "Dear woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"
- Prosecutor: And you said...what?
- Mary Maggie: I said, "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."
- Prosecutor: Yeah, you and how many of the gang of 11? *(Turns to jury & winks.)*
- Mary Maggie: And this is when he called me by name and opened my eyes so I could see! He said "Mary."
- Prosecutor: And you said what?
- Mary Maggie: Rabboni! Teacher!

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Prosecutor: And then—let me guess—you hugged him, married him, and ran off to France to raise a family and live happily ever after.

Mary Maggie: NO. I was startled. Yes, I wanted to hug him, but he said “Don’t cling to me...”

Salome: Typical man.

Mary Maggie: *(To Salome.)* You’re not helping! He said “Don’t cling to me, for I haven’t yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Prosecutor: Brothers, my father and your father, my God and your God? And what do you suppose he meant by that?

Mary Maggie: You see, Jesus always said “Who are my brothers and sisters? Those who care for me and keep my commands!” Don’t you see? The son of the living God called his followers brothers. And he called the holy God of heaven his father and our father! His God and our God!

(Play, “We are Family” for 10 seconds.)

Prosecutor: Hmm, this may date me, but I think I hear “We are Family” by the Sister Sledge playing.

Mary Maggie: Exactly! Imagine: Jesus our brother. And Yahweh, our Father! I don’t have to remind you that this is not the way we Jewish people were accustomed to talking about Yahweh. But there was something about Jesus’ death and resurrection that formed this new testament relationship between God and his people! It was every bit as miraculous as...as...

Salome: A man rising from the dead.

Prosecutor: I, but, I.

Judge: Speechless, counselor? So, Defense, do you wish to

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cross-examine the witnesses?

Perry: Are you kidding? What more could I say? I mean, no thank you your honor.

Judge: The courtroom will now take a short recess for a word from our sponsor.

Reader: Reading from the account of the eyewitness, the Apostle Matthew, the tax collector. Chapter 28:11-15. As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.' If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble." So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

Judge: The court will now resume. Prosecution, please call your next witness.

Prosecution: You honor, I'd like to call the Guards present at the tomb on the morning of April 4.

Bailiff: Guards come forward. (*Guards enter.*) State your name.

Stan Laurel: (*Slowly.*) Stanley Laurel

Oliver Hardy: (*Slowly.*) Oliver Hardy

Bailiff: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Stan & Oliver: (*Crossing their fingers above and lowering behind their back, they speak SLOWLY.*) We certainly do. (*Winks at audience.*)

Prosecution: Now, isn't it true, you were assigned to guard the

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tomb of Jesus of Nazareth on the evening and morning in question?

Stan Laurel: *(Slowly.)* That's true, your honor.

Prosecution: And what did you see that evening?

Oliver Hardy: *(SLOWLY reading a memorized statement on the palm of his hand.)* Jesus' disciples came...during the night *(pause as he forget and looks at hand)* while we were sleeping, and...*(pause as he forget and looks at hand)* they stole his body.

Prosecution: Anything more?

Stan Laurel: Certainly not.

Prosecution: *(To Defense.)* Your witness.

Perry: So, you were sleeping on the job, were you?

Stan Laurel: *(Pleading.)* Well, it had been a long day, you know. We lost an hour with daylight savings time.

Perry: And you admit this even though you know that sleeping on the job is a capital offense—punishable by death?

Oliver Hardy: *(Slowly.)* Really? I didn't know that.

Stan Laurel: Hey, the priests and elders never told us that. Is that true?

Perry: Well, perhaps NOW you'd like to revise your story.

Oliver Hardy: Well, now that you put it that way, we certainly do.

Stan Laurel: You see there was this big earthquake.

Oliver Hardy: And the ground shook...

Stan Laurel: There were locusts...plagues...famine...the dog ate it...
(Oliver looks at Stan and frowns)

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Perry: Remember you're under oath.

Oliver Hardy: Well, anyway, the next thing you know the stone is displaced.

Stan Laurel: And there's this guy in a white robe sitting on top of the stone.

Perry: It was a busy day for Angels, wasn't it?

Oliver Hardy: His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow.

Perry: Like Pat Boone?

Stan Laurel: No, more like Mr. Clean.

Perry: Anything more?

Oliver Hardy: *(Slowly.)* Yes, do you offer a witness protection program?

Perry: *(To judge.)* No more questions, your honor.

Judge: Gentlemen—and I use that term loosely—you may take your seats. Prosecution, any other witnesses you'd care to call?

Prosecution: The prosecution rests, your honor.

Judge: Defense, call your first witness.

Perry: Your honor, I'd like to call Simon Peter to the stand. *(Peter walks to stand.)*

Bailiff: State your name and occupation.

Peter: Simon Peter, fisher of men.

Bailiff: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Peter: Truth? Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the father but by him.

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(Whistles and applause from the gallery. "Yeah, you tell 'em Rocky!")

Judge: (*Rapping gavel.*) Order. Order. Just answer the question simply, Simon.

Peter: Yes, your honor.

Perry: Tell me what happened on the morning of April 4, Peter.

Peter: Well, your honor, it was like this. Me and my friends—

Perry: The so-called gang of 11?

Peter: Oh, there were many more of us, but yeah, primarily the eleven. Well, we were rather down after the death of Jesus, when several of our women friends arrived, and they looked like they'd seen a ghost.

Perry: But they hadn't seen a ghost, had they?

Peter: No, just a resurrected man and a couple angels.

Perry: Oh, that's all.

Peter: Yeah, now I know what you're thinking, but before you outfit me with one of those nice white jackets that ties in the back, I got to tell you that the story sounded like nonsense to us men too. We didn't believe it.

Perry: So you told the women to go to the medicine cabinet, take a couple Tylenols and call you in the morning?

Peter: You don't know me very well, do you? No, I jumped up and ran to the tomb to look.

Perry: And you saw, what?

Peter: I looked in the tomb and saw the grave cloths laying there, like the body had just disappeared.

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- Perry: (To Prosecutor.) Just Disappeared! Your witness, counsel.
- Prosecutor: So, Peter, you say “jumped up” and “ran to the tomb”.
- Peter: Well, something like that.
- Prosecutor: Could it be you ran to the tomb to cover up the evidence of your earlier visit to the tomb, when you stole the body of the Nazarene?
- Peter: I wish I could say that I was the first person to the grave that morning, but to be honest, I didn’t want to go anywhere near the tomb.
- Prosecutor: Of course (*looks at jury and smiles*), no criminal wants to return to the scene of the crime. I’m finished with the witness, your honor.
- Peter: No! Here me out. Us men—we were all afraid to go near it. Had it not been for the witness of women, the truth is, we’d have never even visited the grave of our friend. We were afraid that the Temple leaders would crucify us too.
- Prosecutor: I said, I’m done with you.
- Judge: (To Peter.) You may step down now. (To Perry.) Defense, do you wish to call another witness?
- Perry: John, the son of Salome and Zebedee. (*John approaches stand.*)
- Bailiff: State your name and occupation.
- John: John, fisher of men.
- Bailiff: Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?
- John: So help me God.
- Perry: So, when did you first go to the grave, John?

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- John: Well, it's much the way Peter told the story, only...well, another disciple ran with him too.
- Perry: Another disciple?
- John: Yes...the disciple Jesus loved.
- Perry: So, John, you admit that two men were present at the grave on the morning in question.
- John: Yes, but the grave was empty before we—er, they arrived. You see, the only two men capable of moving a stone of that size would have had to be angels.
- Perry: No further questions your honor.
- Judge: Your witness, prosecution.
- Prosecutor: So, not one, but two disciples were present at the grave in the early morning hours?
- John: That's correct.
- Prosecutor: Aha! So let the court records show that there were two—yes two strong men mysteriously present at the tomb in the early morning hours of the day. Perhaps enough to...say...move a large stone...and carry a corpse out of a grave? No further questions, your honor.
- Judge: *(To Defense.)* Any further questions for the witness, counsel. *(Defense steps forward.)*
- Perry: But John, didn't you say that Peter and his friend were not capable of moving a stone and stealing the body?
- John: *(Laughs.)* Peter?!! Are you kidding? Look at him. *(Peter smiles and flexes muscles.)* He could barely carry his own bones to the grave that morning, much less move a stone or another man's body. *(Peter frowns.)*

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Perry: You sound like you have some intimate knowledge of the situation.

John: Look. After Maggie came and told us about the tomb being opened, Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, ran to the tomb.

Perry: Who is this "one whom Jesus loved" you keep mentioning? *(All the disciples point to John and smile.)*

John: *(Raises his hand in resignation.)* Okay. Okay. We were both running, but—well let's just say the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

Peter: You're a younger man than me, John! You know I could've out run you in my prime!

Judge: *(Raps gavel.)* Silence! Continue.

Perry: Yes, continue.

John: So the disciple Jesus loved looked into the tomb and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

Perry: Of course not. You're Jewish. Touching a dead body would defile you. The very thought of entering the tomb of a dead man would have to take someone of reckless abandon, someone of a completely impetuous and unbridled nature, someone *(Peter smiles and stands)...*

John: Someone named Peter. When Simon Peter arrived, he blew right by me and went inside. He noticed the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had covered Jesus' head folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

Perry: If you remained outside the tomb, how did you know that?

John: Well, I figured, hey, Peter's in there already. So I entered the tomb also.

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- Perry: And you saw what?
- John: I knew it was strange. If someone were to steal the body, there's no way he would have taken time to remove the body clothing. They'd have just taken the body and the wrapping. It just didn't make any sense, but I knew the body was gone.
- Perry: But surely, you didn't believe the dead man had risen from the dead!
- John: No, not yet anyway. We just hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. The Holy Spirit hadn't revealed it to us yet.
- Perry: So you did what?
- John: Peter and I went home, and left Mary Magdalene there. And that's when Maggie encountered Jesus, thinking he was a gardener. Jesus, a gardener, can you imagine? Any other questions?
- Perry: Ah...well...no. No more questions, your honor.
- Judge: Prosecution? Any questions for the disciple Jesus Loved?
- Prosecutor: No further questions, your honor.
- Judge: The courtroom will now take a short recess for a word from our sponsor.
- Reader: Reading from the account of Luke 24:13-16, the physician and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him.
- Judge: The court will now resume. So, we have established that several women were present at the tomb in the

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early morning hours. They saw no body, an open tomb, and encountered Angels in white, and reportedly, the risen man Jesus Christ. Following that, at least two of his disciples have testified that the tomb was empty.

- Perry: Your Honor, I'd like to call Cleopas and Anno to the stand. *(The men come forward.)*
- Bailiff: State your name and relationship to the deceased.
- Cleopas: Cleopas, uncle of Jesus, brother of Joseph, and father of Simeon.
- Anno: *(Slowly.)* Anno Ther Disciple, follower of Jesus, the Son of the Living God.
- Bailiff: Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?
- Men: Yes.
- Judge: Continue your questioning, counsel.
- Perry: Cleopas, is it true that on the day of April 4, you two were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem.
- Cleopas: That is true.
- Perry: Tell me what happened next.
- Cleopas: As we walked along we were talking about everything that had happened: Jesus entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, his betrayal by Judas, his trial, and his crucifixion.
- Perry: And the risen man, Jesus of Nazareth, joined you as you walked?
- Anno: Exactly.
- Perry: No further questions, your honor.

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- Judge: Prosecution? (*Prosecutor approaches witness.*)
- \Prosecution: Anno, how did you know the man you were talking with was the dead man, arisen from the grave?
- Anno: As we talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with us.
- Prosecution: And you recognized him as Jesus from his "W-W-I-D" bracelet?
- Anno: No. As a matter of fact, God kept us from recognizing him.
- Prosecution: Hmm, much like Mary Magdalene said in her experience with the man at the tomb?
- Anno: Exactly!
- Prosecution: Your honor, I have no further questions. These men are clearly delirious.
- Judge: Defense, any further questions?
- Perry: Yes, your honor. So what did Jesus say to you?
- Anno: He asked what we were discussing.
- Cleopas: Well, naturally, distress overcame us and I said to him , "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."
- Perry: So did you explain it to him?
- Cleopas: Yes, I told him Jesus was a prophet who did powerful miracles, a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him.
- Anno: We told him that we had hoped this Jesus was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. You know, we basically told him what WE expected of Jesus.

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Doesn't everybody do that once in a while?

Perry: You have a point there.

Cleopas: We told him about the women who went to his tomb early this morning, and came back with the amazing report that Jesus' body was missing.

Anno: We told him they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive!

Cleopas: And we told them that some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said. But alas, no Jesus.

Perry: So you are explaining all this to the very man you were missing—the walking dead man? Did he say anything else to you?

Cleopas: Yes, he let us speak our peace, and then like a gifted teacher he led us through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Perry: So, when did you finally figure out it was Jesus? His marred hands and feet?

Cleopas: No, as a matter of fact, for us all that stuff faded into insignificance. It was his voice, his word.

Anno: You see, as we were nearing Emmaus, as is the custom, we invited the stranger to spend the night with us.

Cleopas: Then, oddly, as we sat down to eat, he took the position of the host, took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to us.

Anno: Suddenly, our eyes were opened, and we recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

Perry: Your honor, the defense rests.

Judge: *(To Prosecutor.)* Any closing arguments, counsel?

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Prosecutor: Your honor, the state has shown that the gang of 11 and their co-conspirators, the women and the other followers, clearly went to the tomb, released their friend, and came up with lots of fanciful stories to cover their tracks.

Judge: Defense? Closing arguments?

Perry: Your honor, the testimony of the disciples: the eleven, the women, and the followers is all completely consistent, consistent with the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The man described by the witnesses today as being alive, was very much the same man who was crucified on Friday.

Judge: Explain, counsel.

Perry: Prior to his death, on the road to Jerusalem from Nazareth, Jesus opened the eyes of a blind man. After his death, on a road away from Jerusalem, he opened the eyes of Cleopas and friend. In 3-years of ministry, Jesus was the ultimate eye doctor, opening the eyes of the physically and spiritually blind. His followers traveled the road with him for three years, and yet remained blind to the true nature of the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus came to reveal. It was as if they could see him, but not recognize what he was about. Perhaps some of us are a bit like that. As you've seen in the testimony today, following his death, Jesus again continued healing the blind. We have seen how he opened the grave, not so he could get out, but so mankind could enter and believe. He opened the scriptures so the disciples on the road to Emmaus so they could understand them. He opened their minds to recognize that the Kingdom of God was not about politics, power, and being served, but rather serving. And—like he does with people everyday—he calls each person by name, opening their eyes so they recognize him—not as they had created him, but rather as he created and continues to create us.

(Click to play Perry Mason Music as all actors disappear except Perry, who is asleep in his chair again, as his wife comes to wake him.)

The Case of the Open Tomb

Maggie: Wake up, dear. Open your eyes. It's Easter Morning.

Perry: What was the verdict?

Maggie: As always, honey, that is for the jury to decide.

Perry: *(Stands and looks at congregation.)* Has Jesus, the Christ, opened your eyes?

(“Open the Eyes of My Heart” plays in background.)