

82# Sermon @ Little Hocking, OH 3/4/2007 a.m.

Mark T. Tonkery

Is Jesus' Tomb Empty?

Text: Matthew 28:11-15

Purpose: To teach the truth about the empty tomb of Jesus and prove that He is the risen Son of God.

Introduction

- A. Now I am not one who likes to call our Lord's Resurrection Day, Easter but many don't know any different and if you can just bear with me for a moment think of the implications of the following statement?
- B. "There ain't gonna be no Easter this year, one person remarked, Why not? Asked another. They found the bones."
 - 1. More than the financial, social, and cultural implication, is the Biblical implication if man did find the bones of Jesus.
 - 2. Paul states, 1 Cor. 15:14, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."
- A. For most of us the resurrection of Christ and the empty tomb is a matter of faith and fact, yet some have been trying to disprove Jesus death, burial, and resurrection from the very beginning as we see in Mt. 28:11-15.
- B. "So it comes to no surprise that there has been another attack on the resurrection of Jesus Christ just this past week. The Discovery Channel has announced its TV special, which will air tonight on "The Lost Tomb of Jesus." The film is directed by James Cameron ("Titanic") and Simcha Jacobovici, the latter being also co-author with Charles Pellegrino of the forthcoming book *The Jesus Family Tomb*. This media sensation stems from the 1980 discovery during routine construction work in Jerusalem of a first-century family burial plot. Inside the tomb were bone-boxes (called "ossuaries") on which were inscribed the names "Mary," "Mariamne," "Matthew," "Jesus son of Joseph," "Joseph" and "Judah son of Jesus." Because these names were so common in first-century Palestine, the 1980 discovery aroused almost no scholarly interest. But by mixing the ho-hum bare facts with a generous stirring of imagination, the above-mentioned producers and authors have cranked out a spectacular tale of the very family tomb of Jesus Christ, featuring Mary Magdalene as his wife and their previously unknown son Judah. ("Matthew" is supposedly Mary's unknown relative who somehow got included.)" (Edward Fudge). So what is the truth?

Body

- I. The Bible confirms the truth of the empty tomb.
 - A. Consider that Jesus' family tomb was supposedly found in Jerusalem. The truth is the New Testament portrays Jesus' family living in Nazareth of Galilee at the opposite end of Palestine from Jerusalem.
 - 1. The ancestral home of Joseph was Bethlehem, and the family was still in Nazareth after he was apparently dead and gone. Why in the world would he be buried (alone at this point) in Jerusalem? It's unlikely.
 - i. Mat 2:23
 - ii. Mat 26:71
 - 1. Even if nobody had ever said Jesus of Nazareth had been raised to life, the probability is still extremely high that this would not have been the tomb of the Jesus, Mary, and Joseph we know from the Gospels.

"Mary" is by far the most common female name in the period (6 Mary's in scripture alone); "Joseph" (5 Joseph in the NT not counting the OT reference) and "Jesus" are two of the most common male names, with Judah—or Judas—not far behind.

2. Discovering a tomb with these names in one family is rather like an archaeologist two thousand years from now finding a tomb in America with parents called George and Barbara and a child called George, and claiming that this must be the President of the United States.
 3. Besides this all indications tell us that, the family of Jesus was poor and was unlikely to have a family tomb anywhere. Besides that:
 4. Church tradition – and Eusebius – are unanimous in reporting that Mary the mother of Jesus died in Ephesus, where the apostle John, faithful to his commission from Jesus on the cross, had accompanied Mary (John 19:25-27). This text also reminds us that Mary probably was not buried with Joseph who was probably died by this time, if he was alive Mary would had no need to go with John.
- A. This is not the first time atheists and others have tried to claim that the early Christians lied or denied the empty tomb of Jesus. Although the words, “Empty Tomb,” are not mentioned in scriptures. The Bible confirms the truth of the empty tomb.
1. Mt. 12:40 Jesus himself reminds that the tomb would be empty.
 2. Gospel accounts Mt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:12-3; & Jn. 20:1-18.
 - a. The followers of Jesus were eyewitness to Jesus rising from the dead. They were astonished, and didn't remember what Jesus had said about his resurrection until after it had happen.
 1. Acts 2:24-36
 - a. These scriptures contrasts David's tomb, with Christ. David's tomb was full of dust, and decayed bones, where as there was nothing in the tomb that Jesus body had been laid in.
 - b. It's clear that Peter and all in attendance that day knew that Jesus' tomb was left empty.
 - c. If not there would have been a fight about what Peter and the Apostles were preaching.
 1. Acts 13:29-36
 - a. Again the empty tomb is not stated word for word but is clearly meant in Paul's preaching.
 1. 1 Cor.15:3-8
 - a. Paul mentions this as death, burial, and resurrection as first importance in his preaching; meaning the death, burial, and resurrection are foundational to the Christian faith.
- II. History confirms the truth of the empty tomb.
- A. The creators of “The Lost Tomb Of Jesus” documentary state they do not challenge the Resurrection. They say the documentary asks viewers to consider the possibility that the Resurrection occurred from a second tomb.

1. They go on to say, “The writer of the Gospel of Matthew (28:12-15) addresses a rumor that was circulating in Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion, **a rumor that we suggest can be taken for the truth.** The rumor was that the disciples came by night to remove Jesus’ body from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. They would have done this to safeguard his remains from desecrators.
 2. His followers then would have taken the body of Jesus to a permanent tomb.”
 3. This argument assumes that the Bible is fallible and false.
- A. History tells us that for the soldiers who were guarding the tomb were probably Romans - Mt 27:62-66.
1. We must keep in mind:
 - i. They were professional soldiers.
 - ii. Charged to guard the tomb with their lives.
 - iii. The punishment for falling asleep on duty was death.
 1. If the soldiers were asleep one must wonder:
 - a. How did the soldiers know it was the disciples who took the body?
 - b. How could the large stone guarding the entrance be rolled away without awakening the soldiers? It would have taken several men to move it, and would have awoken the sleeping soldiers.
 - c. If the disciples stole the body – why would the soldiers have to be bribed to tell it?
 - d. If the disciples did steal the body how could they die for something they knew was false? How could they all tell the same story? One could produce the body for a sizeable sum of money, but no one did.
 2. Second, the site of Jesus’ tomb was known to Christians and Jews alike. So if it weren’t empty, it would be impossible for the Christian movement founded on the belief in the Resurrection to have come into existence in the same city on the day of Pentecost just Fifty days after the very public crucifixion. The Apostles of Jesus, would have been laughed out of town on the day of Pentecost, yet this did not happen over 3,000 people, were baptized and add to there number which grow from there.
 3. It is also quite remarkable that after the disciples were convinced that Jesus had risen they never again visited His tomb? At least there is no record of it. Why should they? It was only an incident, a temporary halting place in the experience of our Lord. They did not make pilgrimages to it. They did not esteem it above any other place. They did not bury it beneath tokens of affection. They did not break off pieces of the rock and keep them as relics for seeking souls to look at in the hope of meriting divine favor.
 4. No, after that first Sunday evening, the disciples were done with the tomb. Why should they give their time to the worship of places, when they had the living Savior with them?
 5. Christianity is not like Buddhism, Hinduism, Mormonism, Catholicism, or Islam which people make pilgrimages to certain memorial stones, palaces, obelisks,

temples, shrines, tombs, and places. Take for example: Muslims go to Mecca to worship a coffin of a dead Mohammed. Christian faith is in a risen Lord because there is an empty grave! Christians did not make the tomb of Christ a relic or place of worship because Jesus is not there! He has risen and is alive. People who are alive do not need a tombstone to remember them by because they are alive neither does Jesus.

6. There are many facts of history that no one can deny, I just named a few...Many people, 500 at one time and others testified they saw Jesus' resurrection, saw Him alive and saw the tomb empty. These same people suffered greatly because of their testimony -- Such facts support the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

III. Christ's enemies confirm the truth of the empty tomb.

The enemies of Jesus had considered the empty tomb of Jesus even before it happen. They took the claims of Jesus very seriously.

1. Mt. 27:64 they request that the tomb be sealed and soldiers guard the tomb.
2. The disciples didn't even remember Jesus' teaching on the resurrection (Lk. 24:5-9), but the religious leaders did.
3. Because of his claims, they were almost as afraid of Jesus after his death as when he was alive. They tried to take every precaution that his body would remain in the tomb. They sealed it, guarded it, and then when that did not work they lied about it and bribed the soldiers.
4. They failed and by their failure they proved the resurrection.

The enemies of Christ still today confirm the truth of the empty tomb by their outrage and outcry. Have you ever notice the protest people put up about Christ today? Look at all the money people put into trying to disprove Jesus being the Son of God who arose from the grave? And the lies and distorting of the truth and even the ignoring of the truth?

1. Matthew 28:11-15 if it did not happen why pay soldiers to keep their mouth shut. They should have been put to death, but they were not.
2. In the book of Acts why kill people like Steven, James and other Christians if Christ did not leave His tomb empty?
3. Church history tells during 1, 2, and 3 century enemies of the church would write and mock Christians and by there put downs prove Christ.
4. Even today the outrage and outcry against Christianity is common. You can celebrate Islam, Buddhism, Wicca, and the New Age religions in public settings yet Christianity is considered offensive.
5. There are whole communities and state schools here in the United States that study, honor and celebrate Islam, Buddhism, and other religions but Christianity is considered evil and against separation of church and state.
6. A Christian can not say a prayer in public, read from the Bible, or share the Gospel, without the ACLU getting involved, having a law suits filed against them, media mocking them, and all kinds of trouble.

- A. One has to wonder if Jesus was just a teacher, or prophet why still 2,000 years later make a fuss about him?
1. Why try to disprove him? Why waste money and lie about him? Why not ignore him and let those who believe, believe in him if they want?
 2. Why is Jesus such a threat to people of this world even today?
 3. Why is this unless people are afraid that the tomb of Jesus is empty and the bodily resurrection of Jesus did!
 4. If it is true then they realize they are going to have to change their life, stop the evil they are doing, and realize they will have to face judgment before God one day!
 5. I believe even the enemies of Christ have a sense that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true and the only way they can numb the pain of the truth is spend their time fighting against it.

Conclusion

- A. Jesus resurrection caused a great stir and still today is causing a great stir.
- B. There is still only two choices—believe that Jesus rose from the dead, or to be closed to the truth—denying it, ignoring it, or trying to explain it away.
- C. A Roman proverb states: “Great is the truth and it will prevail. It is the fact of history that not all men’s evil plots can in the end stop the truth. The gospel of Jesus Christ is greater than the plots of wickedness.
- D. I stand before you this morning because I believe in the Words of the Bible, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who lived, died, was buried, and resurrected. I believe that Jesus Christ’s tomb is empty!
- E. If we want the benefits of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection then we must enact it as Rom. 6:3-10 states. Will you confess Jesus is the Son of God who arose from the Grave? And enact Christ death, burial, and resurrection in baptism for the remission of sins? Come today as we stand and sing.

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