

THE TOMB IS EMPTY (JOHN 20)

OPEN: If Jesus didn't rise from the dead then our sins cannot be forgiven and we are without hope.

- The empty grave was God's receipt – the payment for sin had been accepted.
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what separates Christianity from all other religions.
- John provides a glimpse of what it was like on that first Sunday morning when they realized the tomb was empty.

John 20:1-18

1) A STRUGGLING WOMAN BECOMES A DEVOTED **SERVANT.** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

- It is interesting that all four Gospels tell us about Mary Magdalene...she is the first to reach the empty tomb.
 - ✓ In N.T. times, a woman's testimony was not allowed in a court of law.
 - ✓ Yet, the Scriptures tell us that a woman would be the first person to see the resurrected Christ...giving honor and dignity to women.
- ❖ Her love for the Lord overcame her fear of man.
 - Meet Mary.
 - ✓ Common name...distinguished from the other Mary's by the name Magdalene.
 - She was from the city of Magdala...a thriving town three miles from Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee.
 - When we visited Israel, they were building a motel here and they had to pause construction because they had uncovered the ancient city **(PICTURES)**.

- Dye works (coloring of fabric) and textile businesses were popular in that day and added to the wealth of the community.
- It is likely that “Mary” earned her living by participating in the industry of her town.
 - ✓ We know nothing of her parents, marital status or her age.
- What we do know, she was once possessed by seven demons (Luke 8:2) of whom Jesus cast out.
 - She may have had fits of insanity, violent epilepsy, mental and physical anguish.
 - Some have concluded that she is the sinful woman of Luke 7 (prostitute) who comes to wash the feet of Jesus having received forgiveness [the one who has been forgiven much, loves much] (Luke 7:47-50), but to say Mary Magdalene is this woman is saying more than Scripture does.
- ✓ She is mentioned 14 times in the Gospel and in eight of those, when listed with other women, she is always at the head of the list...like Peter, she is a leader...a devoted disciple.
- A grateful believer who aided the Lord in His ministry as He traveled from place to place...she quietly served in the shadows.
- There is no evidence to support the belief that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married...such were the claims of the fictional novel, “The DaVinci Code.”
- Mary was present during the final hours of the Lord’s life. The last at the cross, where Jesus died as the Lamb of God and the first at the garden tomb to witness the most important event in world history.
- She was the first among men or women to see the Risen Lord and hers was the privilege of announcing the good news to the rest.
- She stands out as a testimony as to how we should practice our faith and devotion to Christ.

- She disappears from the Scripture but we can well expect that she was in the Upper Room (**Acts 1:14**) when the Holy Spirit came to indwell the believers and she was involved in the early days of the N.T. church.

❖ Once tormented by demons but now a servant of Christ.

❖ So many lessons to be learned here (time is short) let me show you two:

a) **WHEN FOLLOWING THE LORD, DON'T LET THE UNKNOWN PARALYZE YOU.** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

- Their concern: who's going to remove the rock...how will we get in to the tomb so we can finish preparing the body?
 - ✓ These large circular stones could weigh as much as one or two tons.
 - ✓ Matthew tells us: the angel moved the stone...and don't you know the stone was removed, not to let Jesus out but to let the world in.

❖ Our job is to obey and then trust God to make a way (I'm not saying: don't count the cost, seek wise counsel...I'm saying...large boulders are God's business).

b) **TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AND COME UP WITH YOUR CONCLUSION.**

- In the foot race to the tomb:

Vs. 5 arriving first, John stooped and looked in.
(blepo-a casual glance). *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

Vs. 6 Peter goes inside...he sees the grave clothes undisturbed.
(theoreo – to observe carefully). *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

- After three days, the grave clothes would harden, like an empty cocoon it would take the shape of a body.
- No grave robbery here, no struggle to unwrap...puff, He's gone!

Vs. 8 John enters the tomb...he saw and believed.
(horao – to see and to understand, comprehend). *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

- What about you? How do you see Easter (resurrection)?
 - Do you give it a casual look? Empty...nice...what's for lunch?
 - Maybe you are coming up with your own theory...curious...not sure what to make of it?
 - Or having investigated the facts you come up with your own conclusion...He is alive!

2) ORDINARY MEN ARE SENT OUT INTO A BROKEN AND NEEDY WORLD.
(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)

John 20:19-29

- It had been a whirlwind, roller coaster emotions, talk of the resurrection, how could it be possible?
 - ✓ Some had suggested that the disciples had stolen the body?
 - ✓ The religious leaders wouldn't blink at having them crucified...no wonder they were behind locked doors.
- Notice Jesus' first words to them: Peace be with you (vs. 19). *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*
 - ✓ He could have given them a tongue lashing...you denied me, abandoned me...what's wrong with you men???
 - I invested three years into your life and this is what I get?
 - ✓ In His glorified body, He transcends physical barriers. Yet, He is capable of eating, drinking, bearing scars.
- Like a soldier returned from battle he shows them His scars, wounds...the price of freedom.
- The air was punctuated with shouts of joy, hugging and tears.
- What's it all about? **Vs. 21 just as my Father sent me, I am sending you.** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

- ✓ We are not to remain behind closed doors!
- ✓ Paul would later tell us...we are the body of Christ...His hands, feet, and mouth.
 - We go forth to show the love of God and proclaim the message of Christ.
 - We have the cure for sin's disease, let's not lock it in a safe but proclaim it on the streets...Jesus saves.
- ✓ Tell your spouse...tell your kids...tell your neighbors.
- He gave them a taste of the Holy Spirit...you cannot do this on your own...He would ascend in 50 days and they would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ As for forgiving or not forgiving the sins of people...unlike our Catholic friend...this is not some hierarchy reserved for an elite group of Priests.
- ✓ Clearly you can go directly to Christ.
- ✓ When a person receives Christ as Savior you can confirm (agree) with Scripture...your sins have been forgiven.
 - Ours is the privilege of announcing the terms of forgiveness of sins when a person places their faith in Christ.
- ✓ You have heard of the Miranda rights: "You have the right to remain silent...here is your "Eternal rights": "you have the right to receive or reject Jesus Christ. If you refuse His offer of salvation you will die in your sins and forever be separated from God in hell. If you receive Him as your Lord and Savior, you will be forgiven and given a home in Heaven. Do you understand your rights?"
- ❖ I wish I could tell you about Thomas but time doesn't allow it.

3) **JOHN WROTE HIS GOSPEL SO YOU MIGHT BELIEVE AND HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

John 20:30-31

- John gives us his purpose statement...so much more he could have told us.
 - ✓ John is not out to entertain, but to evangelize and edify.
- The three titles John gives to the Lord tells us what we need to know:
 - ✓ Jesus – he was a human being – **Man** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*
 - ✓ Christ – the anointed one – **Messiah** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*
 - ✓ Son of God – deity, He is **God** *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*
- John recorded what we needed to know, providing first-hand account so that we had the information necessary to believe.

Close with illustration:

The Czar of Russia, Nicholas I knew a young man for whom he cared a great deal (son of a good friend). Nicholas gave him the responsibility of paying the soldiers. The young man did his job well until he started hanging out with some rough characters and started gambling. Eventually, he gambled away his own money and then began to dip into the government funds. He had taken only a few rubles at a time but they began to add up.

One day, he received notice that an official would be coming to inspect the books. The young man knew he was in trouble. Looking at the records he couldn't believe how much he owed. He picked up a pen and wrote in large letters: "A great debt, who can pay?"

Knowing he had dishonored the position given him and not wanting to face the Czar, he determined to take his life with his own revolver at the stroke of midnight. The night was warm and drowsy and as he waited for the midnight hour, the young man fell asleep. His hand rested next to the ledger and his pistol in his hand.

It happened that Nicholas would often put on a uniform of a common soldier and visit the troops to see how they were doing. As he walked through the fortress he came upon the young soldier who had fallen asleep. He immediately recognized him and saw the ledger and recognized what the officer had done...written at the bottom: "a great debt, who can pay?" Moved at the moment by mercy and grace, Czar

Nicholas I leaned over, picked up the pen that had fallen from the hand of the sleeping officer, wrote just one word and tiptoed out.

For an hour or so the young man slept. Then he suddenly awoke and seeing that it was long past midnight and he reached for the revolver. As he did his eyes caught sight of his note and something written underneath it. His note read: “a great debt, who can pay?” Underneath was one word, Nicholas I.

He was astonished. Dropping his gun, he raced to the files where he found the signature of the Czar. Carefully comparing the two he realized it was Nicholas’ signature he concluded that he had come through in the night, knew of his guilt, and had taken the means to pay the debt. He need not die.

Instead of taking his life, he rested upon the signature of Czar Nicholas I. The next morning a messenger came with the amount of money needed to satisfy the debt. A few hours later the inspector arrived. Everything was found to be in order.

Point: We are headed to eternal death because of our debt of sin. Written across the ledger of our lives: “a great debt, who can pay?” John is telling us that Jesus paid the debt. Trust Him as your Savior and He will give you the gift of forgiveness (mercy and grace).

“By believing in Him, you will have life by the power of His name. (vs. 31)

- Do you find yourself like Mary Magdalene...struggling? Give Christ control and become a devoted servant.
- What is your conclusion about the resurrection? Do you believe?
- Follower of Jesus, let’s not cower in fear...we are the sent ones!

**Pastor Ralph Schneck
First Baptist Church of Lexington
Message Notes
April 1, 2018**