

## Easter Day Matthew 28:1-10

Tombs often tell us a lot about a person. Tomb stones themselves are often said to be a summation of one's life. We talk about what will be written on our epitaph.

Perhaps the greatest tomb known to human kind was King Tut's tomb discovered in Egypt. He ruled around 1344 BC...at the age of 9. We learn from his tomb of his values and Wealth, it took 7 weeks to get the treasures out! (7 model boats...chairs...thrones...chests all laden with gold...solid gold masks...gold shrines.) Those who have seen the wonders of the Egyptian tombs find the experience indescribable.

Closer to home in any reasonably established cemetery it's easy to spot the important people. The ever so dramatic angels atop large plinths adorn graves alongside ridiculously tall obelisks. They serve now as a headache to those responsible for the health and safety of the graveyard but at the time they were a permanent memorial of wealth and stature in life.

Consider by contrast the simple tomb of Jesus that changed the world. THROUGH AN EMPTY TOMB, GOD TELLS ALL...First, He tells us: HIS POWER IS ULTIMATE. The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian Kings. Westminster is revered, because in it rests the bodies of English nobles and notables. But the Garden Tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty.

There is the ultimate demonstration of God's power in Christ. It was the final fulfilment of countless prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, God's very own; including not only how he'd been born but how he would die, be buried, his grave and his resurrection.

It was the definitive demonstration of power over all of life. It transformed fearful lives, infusing them with courage and hope...from which to change the world. Yet some hearts were threatened, even as Jesus had predicted, "if they did not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

Yet the evidence still stands of an empty tomb and a risen Saviour. There have been attempts to completely disprove the resurrection. A fascinating read at this time of year is Frank Morison's book "Who moved the Stone" where the author outlines the more persuasive arguments for some sort of mistake – for no resurrection at all. At the end even Morison is unconvinced but his arguments are worth hearing if only to remind ourselves how difficult to fake this event really was.

Some suggest JESUS WASN'T REALLY DEAD. Beaten until unable to stand...nailed to a cross....Pierced...water and blood. But four experts sign death certificate. He was prepared for burial with 100 lbs of spices and garments. A stone mat "large" ...1 ½ -2 tons, rolled down a channel, a fourth document says it took 20 men to remove such a stone. There were extra Guards a Roman seal. It could not have been a recovering Jesus who came completely and fully alive to the disciples, even if he was not dead, he was unable to recover from such an ordeal in 3 days but a resurrected Jesus could.

Others have suggested the DISCIPLES STOLE JESUS FROM THE GRAVE, those same, fearful disciples...who fled so they wouldn't even be associated with him by the Roman

authorities, they overtook the patrol of guards, moved the stone, and were transformed into relentless courage in which all but one were martyred for the risen Lord who they stole. It isn't likely that they would do all that for a dead man.

Others say it was the WRONG TOMB. But Jesus was not buried in a graveyard as we know it, but rather in one grave in a garden. Mary and the women would have to be wrong. Peter and John, Joseph, the new owner of the tomb; and the Roman guards must have all been sitting outside the wrong tomb.

The truth is that Peter could stand forty days later and proclaim Jesus resurrection undisputed. The apostle Paul could speak of Jesus appearance to over 500 most of whom were contemporaries of Jesus! If each only testified for six minutes you would have fifty hours of first hand eye witness testimony!

Professor Thomas Arnold, for fourteen years the headmaster of Rugby, author of the three-volume History of Rome, and holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, was well acquainted with the value of evidence in determining historical facts. This great scholar said, "I have been for many years studying the histories of other times, and know how to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

So an empty tomb, with no fancy words is a pretty powerful thing in this context and you may like to think about that when you go home and eat your Easter eggs. Some people will say that Easter eggs are a rip off, all packaging and no chocolate. Some will prefer to have a solid bar of chocolate than a hollow egg. For some reason our society thinks that hollow eggs are a deliberate ploy by the chocolate factories to make something look big and impressive with the minimum amount of chocolate.

But the first hollow eggs were created for a very specific purpose at a time when making hollow eggs was very difficult. A few hundred years ago chocolate was very difficult to work with as it was simply a paste of roused cacao beans. Moulding shapes from it was tricky to say the least, so this wasn't an easy way to make money for less chocolate. Rather, the symbolism of the egg – the new life of Easter was stretched a bit further. The hollow egg could now come to mean the empty tomb. Sometimes the hollow eggs contain sweets as a symbol of the wonderful thing that came from that tomb, and sometimes the egg is just hollow, a symbol of the tomb that could not contain the risen Christ. So, think on that tomb as you eat your eggs and the ultimate truth of the confession He is Risen!