

Remnant Life Church
April 17, 2022
The Power of the Third Number
Resurrection Sunday
Matt 28:1-7

What is that separates Jesus from all the other historical religious leaders?

- Numbers – every one of us, every one of them, has two
 - I don't know my second number – but my first one is 1958 – the year I was born
 - Confucius had two numbers 551 BC – 479 BC – the date of his birth and the date of his death
 - Muhammad's numbers were 570 – 632
 - Joseph Smith born in 1805, died in 1844
 - And the creator of Scientology L. Ron Hubbard – his two numbers are 1911 – 1986
- But Jesus added a third number
 - 3 BC – 30 AD and 3 days – the dates of His birth, His death, and His resurrection

READ – *Matthew 28:1-7*

- The wonderful thing about today is that it is God's ultimate revelation and answer to the problem of sin and the condition of man's heart
 - Not that He did not reveal Himself in other ways
 - There is the glory of His creation; His power demonstrated time and again with the Israelites, the life and the miracles of Jesus Christ
 - But perhaps nowhere else are we given the full summation of God's ultimate response, to all of humanity, settled it once and for all, than the empty tomb that we celebrate this morning

You can learn a great deal about a person from their tomb

- The most famous was discovered 100 years ago
 - On November 4, 1922, after a decade of fruitless searching, a British Egyptologist by the name of Howard Carter uncovered the tomb of a pharaoh that had been sealed for 3,200 years
- It began by his uncovering just one step that led to a staircase leading down to a sealed door
 - Tutankhamun ruled for 10 years from around 1334 to 1324 BC taking power at the age of 9 before succumbing to numerous physical deformities and illnesses at the age of 19
 - He was known as "The Boy King"
- It took another 10 years for Carter to remove and catalogue all of the treasure
 - Full-sized throne
 - Several beds, chairs, and stools
 - A full-sized, gold covered chariot

- A painted full-size river barge
- Numerous chests filled with gold
- 413 figures many of them life-sized
 - Even an Egyptian game board with playing pieces
 - All designed to be of help and a comfort to the king in the afterlife

But compare all of that to the tomb of Jesus

- It was comparatively small grotto cut out of a wall of rock in a garden
 - There was a single, heavy round stone rolled in front of the entrance
 - And initially there was nothing inside except the body of Jesus wrapped in the burial clothes of the time
- This is important to understand because, unlike the discovery by Howard Carter in 1922, the tomb of Jesus was not important for what was found in the tomb but rather what was not
- JESUS was not there, and it forever changed the world

What is that we can we learn, or perhaps be reminded of this morning because of that empty tomb?

1. God's Power through Jesus was Ultimate

- a. Every tomb is known by who is buried there
 - i. The pyramid tombs of Egypt contained the mummified bodies of the pharaohs
 - ii. In Westminster Abbey in London you find the remains of English nobles and royalty including 16 Kings and Queens of England as well as Sir Isaac Newton, Charles Dickens, and Rudyard Kipling
 - iii. In Saudi Arabia is Mohammed's tomb – stone coffin containing his bones
 - iv. In Moscow there is a plexiglass coffin where the remains of Lenin can be viewed
 - v. Arlington Cemetery in DC – JFK and members of the Kennedy family; President Howard Taft; Robert Todd Lincoln; the Challenger shuttle astronauts; Earl Warren; Douglas MacArthur; Thurgood Marshall are all buried there.

But the Garden Tomb of Jesus is known because it was then, and is still today, empty

- b. Because God had a plan
 - i. Beginning in the Garden of Eden ([Gen 3:15](#))
 - ii. And revealed in and through the writings of the OT prophets
 - iii. The Prophet Isaiah wrote over 100 prophecies regarding Jesus many regarding how he would die – 700 years before Jesus was born and 300 years before crucifixion was developed

Down through the centuries many have tried to disprove the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection

- There begin by attempting to refute the power of God contending that Jesus did not really die but was only unconscious when taken down from the cross
- For this to be true, Jesus would have revived in the tomb and escaped, but...
 - Scourged or beaten until nearly unconscious and unable to walk
 - He had 6-8” spikes driven through His wrists and feet
 - He was suspended on the cross for 6 hours making it very difficult to breathe as his body goes into shock
 - In that position, in order to draw a breath, you would have to push up on the small ledge, with nails in your feet, to allow you lungs to expand
 - It is why soldiers would eventually come and break the prisoner’s legs to prevent them from doing that and cause them to suffocate
 - Then, once he is in the tomb and revives, he must free himself from the full body wrap placed tightly around him
 - Roll a large stone weighing as much as 1500 pounds
 - Overpower 2 professional, heavily armed Roman soldiers
 - All after having endured the physical and emotional trauma without having slept for at least 36 hours
 - And they will try and tell us that we believe is nonsense!
- Some say the disciples came and took Jesus
 - The same men who abandoned Jesus in the Garden?
 - Again, having to roll the stone out of the way
 - After overpowering the guards – [Matt 27:66](#)
 - BTW - Roman soldiers only had one purpose – obey orders
 - To fail your assignment at your post meant death
 - They would have apparently very carefully removed Jesus since they took the time to neatly remove and leave His burial clothes behind
 - Then somehow stage his appearances to nearly 600 people on several different occasions in multiple locations for nearly 6 weeks without being arrested or captured by the Romans
- Some have tried to explain it by saying they were at the wrong tomb
 - This was not just an obscure hole dug in haste
 - Carefully prepared
 - A rich Pharisee by the name of Joseph ([Matt 27:57-60](#))
 - And it was not in a graveyard but a solitary tomb in a garden
 - The women went to Jesus’ tomb
 - Peter and John ran to the place where he was buried; they did not need to search for it
 - There were even guards posted at Jesus’ tomb

In more recent times scholar after scholar have tried to refute the resurrection through empirical, scientific evidence – and what have been the results?

- Josh McDowell – was a self-proclaimed agnostic in college; it was while writing a paper refuting Christianity that he instead proved it to himself to be true after more than 700 hours of investigative study
 - Authored more than 115 books
 - *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (1972)
 - *Evidence for the Resurrection* (2009)
- Prof Thomas Arnold – author of a multi-volume study of Rome and holder of the Chair of Modern History at Oxford University
 - “I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and 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 has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead”
- Then there is the case of literary scholar and author CS Lewis (*The Screwtape Letters*; *The Chronicles of Narnia*) was a professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University and had always believed Christians to simply “be wrong” about their beliefs
 - After evaluating the basis and evidence for Christianity, Lewis concluded that in other religions there was “no such historical claim as in Christianity.”
 - His knowledge of literature forced him to treat the Gospel record as a trustworthy account. “I was by now too experienced in literary criticism to regard the Gospels as myth.” he wrote.
 - Finally, contrary to his strong stand against Christianity, Professor Lewis said he had to make an intelligent decision: “You must picture me alone in my study, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all of England.”
- The power of God raising Jesus from dead is evidenced by the empty tomb and it is undeniable.

2. Through the empty tomb, God shows us that His greatest love is for His creation

- a. **Luke 19:10** - *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*
- b. **Luke 15:3-7** - *Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*
 - i. Why? – Because of His great love for His creation
 - ii. And for how He sees you

- c. A gem dealer was strolling through the aisles at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show one year when he noticed a blue-violet stone the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over, then, as calmly as he was able, asked the vendor, "You want \$15 for this?" The seller, realizing the rock wasn't as pretty as others in the bin, lowered the price to \$10. The gem dealer quickly paid the vendor and then walked nervously to his car and drove very carefully home. For that unattractive, ordinary, potato-shaped stone was later certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, nearly 800 carats larger than the next largest stone of its kind. It was appraised at \$2.28 million.
You see it took a lover of stones to recognize the sapphire's worth just as it took the Lover of Souls to recognize the true value of ordinary looking people like me and like you.
- d. We see the flaws, the short-comings, and the frailties in each other and in ourselves
- e. God sees His child and it is why Jesus was born and lived, not in royalty, but in obscurity
 - i. To live among and minister to the poor, the lepers, and the social outcasts
 - ii. God's love for us far surpasses what we see and call lovely and what the world calls acceptable
 - iii. He is the lover of our souls!

3. Finally, the empty tomb means that His presence is here with us today

- a. What the religious leaders of that day did not know was that killing Jesus was like trying to get rid of a dandelion by blowing the white furry seeds off the stem
- b. Death, the tomb, even satan and all the demons of hell could not hold the One who sees and knows all of creation ([Heb 4:13](#))
- c. Consider again that grand Egyptian tomb
 - i. Carter descended the revealed steps to the entrance
 - ii. He looked in for the first time by candle-light
 - iii. His sponsor who was with him called out, "Do you see anything?"
 - iv. "Yes," he replied, "marvelous things!"
 - v. It was then to everyone's amazement that Howard turned, climbed back up the stairs, sat down heavily on the first step, placed his face in his hands, and wept
 - vi. Those with him assumed out of joy and excitement
 - 1. But after a few moments when he could compose himself enough to speak he said, "10 years ago I dug 18" from this very step. I was so close, but I missed it"
 - 2. How close are you this morning to the glory of the empty tomb?

That empty tomb shouts the love of God this morning

- Not just for the wealthy, the privileged, the learned, the gifted, the beautiful or a select few

- He shouts His love this morning for you and for me
- He shouts it for anyone who is willing to seek forgiveness and surrender their lives
- He shouts it for every single life
- The question is – how do you respond?
 - Do you ignore His presence and live your life according to your own will, desires, and gratification?
 - Or do you surrender your life and invite Him to live in your heart?

You can go today and visit the graves of the famous

- I have stood at the gravesite of JFK in Arlington, VA and seen the eternal flame
 - I have stood at the grave of Benjamin Franklin at Christ Church in center city Philadelphia
 - And the grave of John Smith in York one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence
- But you will not stand at the grave site of Jesus Christ because the place He was laid is no longer His grave
 - He is risen! He is alive!
 - And He is coming again for His church, for all those who know Him as their Lord and Savior!