***The Empty Tomb*** 4-17-22

*Bottom Line: Our faith in Jesus rests on our belief in the historical fact of his resurrection.*

**Introduction:**

 A. When I was a kid, I really loved Easter.

 B. That’s all history for me – but I love history.

 C. Have you ever thought about the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus?

 1. The climax and point of all four Gospels

 2. The heart of what they preached – witnessed and not just a few. 1 Cor. 15:3-8

 3. Belief in the resurrection is essential – Romans 10:9

 D. The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact. Records and eyewitnesses lived and wrote.

 E. Even if you think they were all crazy – how do you explain the historical fact that his tomb was empty?

F. Theories advanced to explain away the empty tomb…

**1. The disciples faked the resurrection by stealing the body.**

 A. Theory began with the bribed guards: Went to HP not Pilate. Not Temple guards!

 1. Matthew tells: gave a large sum of money and told to say, “His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.” Mt.28:11-15

 B. Problem #1: If asleep, how could they have known it was the disciples?

 C. Problem #2: Roman soldiers were “fighting machines,” and could have dealt with disciples easily. Disciples who “fled” already.

 D. Problem #3: Slept through it? Group, stone 1 to 2 ton? Move body? Would have to have earmuffs.

 E. Problem #4: The character of the disciples! Before, too timid and fearful. After resurrection, fearless and strong.

**2. The authorities stole the body!**

 A. Why do the very thing that caused their problem

 B. Would have marched the body through town if they could, but they couldn’t produce it.

 C. “The silence of the Jews and Romans speaks louder than the voice of the Christians.”

**3. The Resuscitation or Swoon theory!**

 A. Passed out and revived in the tomb

 B. Ignores the damage inflicted and the spear thrust.

 C. Might be a greater miracle! Even skeptics don’t buy!

**4. The Passover Plot!**

 A. Book by Hugh Schoenfield – plot, faked death planned, Joseph part of it, drug given. Plan ruined by spear thrust.

 B. Full of holes: Roman executioners good; guards good, the Roman seal; the size of the stone, Jesus would have had to agree with it; the disciples were changed!

 C. Men and women do not devote their life and offer their lives for a scam

**Conclusion:**

A. The only explanation, when the facts are examined and the preconceived notions are removed, is that Jesus rose from the dead as a supernatural act of God.

B. If it is a historical fact, what should we do? Change!

C. Like Peter and John in Acts 4:1-13, only months later!

D. Easter is when we remember that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, He will do the same for us.