

# “A Preaching Tomb”

*Please open your Bible to Matthew 27:57 - 28:9.*

In Canton, Ohio, the William McKinley National Memorial stands where our 25<sup>th</sup> President and his wife Ida are entombed. President McKinley was cut down by an assassin’s bullet in the midst of his illustrious tenure, during which the reach of American power was extended in the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean to East Asia. After a conversion experience as a youth, he regularly worshipped in Methodist churches, prayed and read the Bible daily, often testified to his faith, and consistently followed Christian standards. He’s been called “one of America’s most intensely religious presidents,” and McKinley enthusiastically supported missions and insisted that God directed history and his own life.”

The McKinley Memorial is an impressive structure that was built privately, sponsored by over one million financial donations, and completed and dedicated in 1907. It, and the adjacent visitor’s center, relate the life and career of one of the most significant presidents of American history. So that McKinley, though dead for now nearly 123 years, still speaks.

In the nearby cemetery, I noted the epitaph on a headstone, which says,

*“As you are now, so once were we. As we are now, so you shall be.”*

That headstone still speaks!

I’ve told people that on my headstone, I want a *motion sensor*. This is so that when people walk by, they could hear an automated recording of me speaking to them. I am not sure what my message would be, except to trust in Christ while you have the opportunity, and don’t delay!

The tomb of Jesus, outside of the city of Jerusalem, still speaks as much as it ever did on the first Easter morning! While it is empty, it proclaims a tremendous sermon, worthy of the greatest preacher.

**1. The tomb speaks of the reality of Jesus’ death** (Matthew 27:58-60). That Jesus’ body lay there for more than just a few hours points us to the fact that Jesus indeed died on the Cross. Some believe that Jesus was not put on a Cross, and did not die, yet the Scriptural record is plain. When He was crucified at Calvary, He endured tremendous suffering. He received much physical pain, as well as the spiritual agony of having our sins placed on Him, so for Him to die for us. As it was growing late in the day, the Roman soldiers wanted to hasten the deaths of the three men there. They broke the legs of the two thieves, yet when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. And Roman soldiers were experts in death. So there was no doubt.

**2. The tomb speaks of fulfilled prophecy.** In Isaiah 53:9, the prophet Isaiah wrote about a sinless Servant (the Messiah) being put to death with the wicked and buried with the rich. This was among the many details that Isaiah prophesied about in regards to the Messiah. About 700 years after Isaiah recorded this prophecy, Jesus was put to death along with two criminals and was buried in a tomb owned by a wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathea, as explained in Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50:56 and John 19:38-42. The empty tomb verifies Psalm 16, “For You will not leave my soul in the grave, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”

**3. The tomb speaks of the deity of Christ.** Only God could rise from death without an outside power in operation. Jesus Himself rose from the grave. In the empty tomb, Jesus shows that God is Lord even over death.

**4. The tomb speaks of the power of Christ.** An ordinary human cannot rise from the dead on his own. In fact, even those whom Jesus raised to life during His ministry would die once again, and their souls await the general resurrection of saints at the Rapture of the Church. Jesus showed His power over death, and it says that believers also will experience victory over death.

**5. The tomb motivates telling the news** (Matthew 28:7). The resurrection of Jesus from the dead has been at the heart of the Gospel from the beginning. The empty tomb tells us that the grave could not

hold Jesus and that He bodily rose from the grave. We are urged to ***go, tell!***

**6. The tomb encourages great joy** (Matthew 28:8). The disciples, on Thursday evening, saw Jesus arrested, and they fled from Gethsemane in fear. The tomb was initially a place of mourning, and on Sunday morning, now empty, becomes the epicenter of a growing outburst of joy among the believers. ***“He is not here. He is risen, just as He said.”***

***Pastor Craig Alan Myers***