

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

TRYING TO ENTOMB THE LORD

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We all admire people who can't be stopped—that soccer player who always manages to get through the defensive line; the person who suffers unbelievable setbacks yet stays cheerful and still manages to do a lot for others; the hero in a movie who gets forced by his enemy to jump off a cliff (so that we all believe he's dead) who yet manages to escape alive.

Think of the Lord: surrounded by soldiers at night when only a few of His followers were around, captured by His enemies for no just reason, tied up, slapped and spit upon, struck on the head with a rod, teased and made fun of, lashed with a whip, then nailed through the hands and feet to a wooden cross, and left hanging there to die a horrible death—all this while there were soldiers around. He seemed to be completely beat. Not only this. Afterwards His body was put in a tomb with a large stone door. They sealed the door and placed a guard of soldiers outside so that no one could get in or out!

Of course, the Lord's followers were utterly shocked and heartbroken. They could hardly believe that it all happened to the Lord. The Lord's special disciples (the eleven who were left) were sad and disappointed more than anyone else. They had really thought the Lord was going to become king. They had thought He was unbeatable. On top of this, because they had been with the Lord so often, they were scared that they would be captured and killed too. For these reasons none of the disciples had the courage (at first) to go to the tomb to pay their respects to the Lord. Besides, they were probably just too disappointed.

Meanwhile, the Scribes and the Pharisees must have been pleased with themselves. They thought that Jesus was dead, out of their way. They had gotten rid of Him. And His body was even sealed away in a tomb and guarded by soldiers. They wouldn't have to worry about Him any more. This would "shut up" His disciples, wouldn't it?

But what happened next? When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb early Sunday morning, what happened? All of a sudden there was an earthquake. An angel appeared whose face shone like lightning and whose clothes were dazzling white like snow. He rolled the stone away, breaking the seals. The guards were so terrified that they fainted; they became like dead men. They had no power against an angel.

But what the angel showed them and told them was even more amazing. The Lord's body was not in the tomb! How had it gotten out? And the angel said, "He is not here; He has risen." He was alive! —not only as to His spirit but His body too!

A few minutes later the two Marys were greeted by the Lord. And He said to them, "Rejoice!" What a wonderful, happy thing. He was alive! His enemies could not kill Him, not even His body.

This story is one of the most important ones in the Word. It teaches us that the Lord Jesus (who came to earth and touched us with His great love and wisdom) is more than just a man. He is our God. Who else could have risen from the dead like He did? This story also teaches us that there really is a life after this one. Our eyes can be opened like the disciples' to see it. There is so much more to life than we can see with our earthly eyes. And finally it teaches that the Lord has all power. He cannot be hurt by evil people. Nor can they stop Him from helping good people.

It is this last point that we are speaking about now: the Lord could not be stopped. The scribes and Pharisees used soldiers and the power of a Roman governor to try to capture and kill Him. They shut Him in a rock tomb in the earth and sealed its heavy stone door.

So also evil people had used lies and tricks to “kill” the Lord in other people’s minds. They had tried to shut His Word so that no one would read it nor understand it, nor think it was worth understanding. They had tried to twist its meaning so that people wouldn’t really *see* what it said nor *do* what it said. They had tried to block the way to heaven so that they could be in control.

We see all this pictured in our story. The tomb where the Lord’s body was laid stands for heaven. It stands for heaven because when angels think of a tomb, they don’t think about dying, but about going to heaven. The great stone door is the Word, which is the way to heaven. Evil people in the church had sealed up the Word and wouldn’t let anyone near, so that no one could “open” it and get to heaven (see AC 2916, AE 400:14, 687:18).

But just as things seemed darkest, the Lord came. And with great power (like the angel’s) He changed the way things had been in the church. His coming was like an earthquake! He pushed back the evil (they “became like dead men”). All by himself He broke the seal of falsity and opened the Word. Then people could see that He was still alive, and they could see the way to heaven (see AE 400:14).

All this is pictured in what happened on Easter morning. Think of that scene once more: it was still dark in the early morning as the two Marys came sadly to the tomb. The unfriendly-looking guards, with their swords and spears, were still keeping watch. It was quiet and lonely. All of a sudden the ground heaved and rumbled and shook. A dazzling angel appeared, and with great strength pushed away the rock and sat on it. The guards were terrified and helpless. Light shone from the angel as he showed the women the opened tomb and told them the good news. And moments later they saw the Lord with new eyes, never to doubt again!

The Lord said to them, “Rejoice!” And so should we rejoice. For we are lucky to know that the Lord is alive! He is strong! He has made His truth shine brightly for us in His Word! He has opened to us the way to heaven! And we know that *no one* can stop the Lord from bringing us there...if only we let Him.

Text: Matthew 27:57, 28:17