



## **The Empty Tomb**

*April 20, 2003 (Easter Sunday)*

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### **Introduction:**

Little Philip, born with Down's syndrome, attended a third-grade Sunday School class with several eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences, according to an article in leadership magazine. But because of a creative teacher, they began to care about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully.

The Sunday after Easter the teacher brought to class Leggs pantyhose containers, the kind that looks like large eggs. Each receiving one, the children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life and put it in the egg-like container. Back in the classroom, they would share their new-life symbols, opening the containers one by one in surprise fashion. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table.

Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After opening each one to see a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would "ooh" and "ahh." Then one was opened, revealing nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment."

Philip spoke up, "That's mine."

"Philip, you don't ever do things right!" the students retorted. "There's nothing there!"

I did so do it," Philip insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. The tomb was empty!"

Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class. He died not long afterward from an infection most normal children would have shrugged off. At the funeral this class of eight-year-olds marched up to the altar not with flowers, but with their Sunday school teacher, each to lay on it an empty pantyhose egg.

*Source unknown*

With over 300 references in the Bible that speak to us about Jesus resurrection from death, we can understand how our belief about Jesus' resurrection is such an important part of our faith and is foundational to the complete work that Jesus did.

### **John 11:25-26**

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

The question is, "Do you believe this?"

## **Resurrection of Christ Is...**

### **I. The seal of a finished work**

#### **Acts 13:29-33**

When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

One of the things that I try to do in life is to finish what I have started. When I don't finish, for whatever reason, those who would have benefited from the finished work are unable to enjoy what was being done, because it is not complete. The work of Christ would have been incomplete if He had not come out of the tomb that resurrection morning. Jesus did not abandon the work of salvation because of death, or the grave. Jesus laid down His life, and He took it up again.

It is through the resurrection that our salvation is made complete. From the very beginning of time, it was the work of the devil to break and destroy the fellowship that God wants us to have with Him.

That started in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's word and they ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. At that time they died spiritually.

What Jesus did on the cross was the full payment for our sin, and death. That is only part of the story. What Jesus did in rising again was to provide for us the assurance of eternal life. If Jesus had not overcome death and the grave, there would have been no basis for which we could come to God the Father, because there is only one way we can come to God, and that is through a living Christ.

The empty tomb seals the fact that what was accomplished on earth has been made known in heaven and our mediator, Jesus Christ, lives to be our advocate. He as our high priest lives in heaven to make an eternal sacrifice on our behalf and act as our go between.

### **II. The sign of a glorious triumph**

#### **Hebrews 2:14-15**

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

It was through His death and resurrection that we see triumph. He shared in our humanity so that by His death we might be made free from Satan's destructive power, and be freed from the fear of death.

Those who follow Christ don't have to be afraid of death, because death has no terrors for the believer. To be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord.

The empty tomb is a sign to us that Jesus was triumphant in the complete work that He came to do. He took captivity captive and through His resurrection He spoiled the work that Satan began in the garden.

Through His resurrection, He is able to restore what had been broken.

### **III. The pledge of a coming resurrection**

#### **1 Cor. 15:20-22**

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Because of the empty tomb, we have the pledge of a coming resurrection. We have the assurance that we will also follow Him in His triumph over death. If that same spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, He will bring to life our mortal bodies.

Since death came through Adam - a man, so the resurrection had to come through a man as well. Even though Jesus was fully the Son of God, he was also the Son of Man, God with us in flesh - Emmanuel.

The word tells us here that in Christ all will be made alive. Christ was the first one to experience the change that happens at resurrection. There is a day coming when Jesus Christ will return and all those who have died in Christ will be made alive. We who are alive at His coming will be changed; will go

through a metamorphosis, if you will. Why does this have to happen? Because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; it is a spiritual kingdom.

When we are raised in new life, we will have a heavenly body. The change that will take place will happen quicker than we can blink our eyes. The curse of death that has existed since sin came into the world will be done away with.

#### **I Cor. 15:54**

Then when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: death has been swallowed up in victory. Where O death is your victory, where O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. The certainty of a future judgment**

##### **Acts 17:31**

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.

The empty tomb is proof that there is a future judgment to come. Justice will be meted out by the living Christ at that point.

There is a day that is set for that judgment to take place. Each of us will stand before the Righteous

#### **Conclusion:**

Jesus resurrection is:

- The seal of finished work
- The sign of a glorious triumph
- The pledge of a coming resurrection
- The certainty of a future judgment

Dr. Seamands tells of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa. Some of his friends asked him, "Why have you become a Christian?" He answered, "Well, it's like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go. And there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive - which one would you ask which way to go?"

Warren Webster, April, 1980, *HIS*, p. 13.

judge and answer for how we lived our lives in light of God's truth and how we responded to that truth.

The empty tomb stands as a testimony that that day is yet to come.

In the last book of the Bible – Revelation, John is given a vision of Jesus and things yet to come. In His vision, Jesus appears to him and assures John that He is who He claimed to be. In John 11:25 – Jesus refers to Himself as being the resurrection and the Life. Here in Revelation, He speaks of Himself as having been dead, and being alive forever and ever. Forever and ever means to never die. Eternal work has been done. Neither time nor anything else can change the work that Jesus has done.

Jesus also speaks of Himself as the living one. He is the resurrection and life - the one who stood up after laying down in death. The one who said whoever believes in me though he dies, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

If your faith and trust is in Jesus Christ, you will live forever in Heaven with Jesus. If your physical body dies, it will live and be changed in the final resurrection.

##### **Rev. 1:18**

I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

When I think of keys, I think of someone who has authority. I think of someone who has the right to unlock or lock, someone who can bind or loose.