

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

Trying to Entomb the Lord

by the Rev. Grant H. Odhner

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) yet who manages to escape alive.

Think of the Lord: surrounded by soldiers at night, captured by His enemies for no just reason, tied up, slapped and spit upon, struck on the head, 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 before being buried in a rock tomb. He seemed to be completely beaten.

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 so that no one could get in or out. Jesus couldn't worry them anymore. And this would "shut up" His disciples, wouldn't it?

Then think of what happened on Easter morning when the two Marys came sadly to the tomb. The guards, with their swords and spears, were still keeping watch. It was quiet and lonely and still dark. All of a sudden the ground heaved and rumbled and shook. A dazzling angel appeared, 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 the women saw the Lord with new eyes, never to doubt again!

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. And, finally, it teaches us 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 focusing on: 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 the Lord in a rock tomb and sealed it with a heavy stone.

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.

All this is pictured in the Easter story. The tomb where the Lord's body was placed represents heaven because when angels think of a tomb, they don't think about dying, but about entering

heaven. The great stone door is the Word. The Word is the way to heaven. Evil people in the church had sealed up the Word and wouldn't let anyone near it. They did not want anyone to "open" it and get to heaven (see *Arcana Coelestia* 2916; *Apocalypse Explained* 400:14, 687:18).

But, just as things seemed darkest, the Lord came. And, with great power, He changed the way things had been in the church. His coming was like an earthquake! He pushed back the evil and, 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 eternal life (see *Apocalypse Explained* 400:14).

When the two Marys saw the risen Lord, He said to them, "Rejoice!" And we should also rejoice. For we are blessed to know that the Lord is alive! He has made His truth shine brightly for us in His Word! He has opened the way to heaven for us! And *no one* can stop the Lord from bringing us into eternal happiness...if only we will let Him.

Text: Matthew 27:57, 28:17