

**T**wo thousand years ago, Jesus Christ was hung on a cross until He was dead, and then buried in another man's tomb. After three days He rose from the dead and was seen by many of His followers. We celebrate **EASTER** because it is...

**when Jesus conquered death and the grave, the fulfillment of Jesus' love for humanity, and not the end, but the beginning.**

# The Day Peter Ran

By Dr. Ralph Wilson

By day it gnawed at him, but nights were even worse. He had betrayed his dearest friend. Not privately, not secretly, but blatantly, out in the open for all the world to see. And now it was too late to say, "I'm sorry." His friend was dead.

Peter tossed sleeplessly, unable to find a position that felt comfortable. Outside he could hear the sounds of Jerusalem stirring to life. This city he had once loved to visit, he now hated. It held too many painful memories impossible to erase from his mind. Today he would leave for Galilee and fishing, though even fishing held no allure for him now. Nothing did.

*How could I have so utterly shamed Him? How could I? Peter, you d--- coward! For the thousandth time he cursed himself. He was my friend! How could I have done this to my very best friend?*

He could see Jesus riding that donkey down the hill into Jerusalem to the cheers of thousands. He saw Him in hot anger overturning coin-laden tables in the temple. "You have made my Father's house a den of thieves!" the Master had told them in carefully measured but biting words.

Peter recalled blind men abruptly seeing, lame men suddenly walking, and loathsome lepers' skin turning baby-soft within a moment of Jesus' touch. He saw Jesus' smile, His compassion, His hours of gentle teaching. He felt the Master's hand on his shoulder after a long day of caring for the multitudes. The accompanying words repeated

themselves over and over in his mind, "Thanks, Peter, for your help today. You are a faithful friend ... a faithful friend ... a faithful friend." Tears began to well up in Peter's eyes. Faithful? Me?

When the high priest's soldiers had tried to arrest Jesus, Peter had defended his Master with a sword. But later, when a servant girl had challenged him with: "You're one of His disciples, aren't you?" he had denied it with an oath. A mere servant girl! But again and again he had compounded the cowardly lie until the cock crowed, and Jesus' eyes from far across the courtyard met his. Sad, disappointed eyes. Then he had broken and run. Run from the high priest's home into the dark streets. Run until he could run no more. Run until he had flung himself onto the cobbled streets sobbing.

Later that morning he had watched from a distance as they mocked and tormented his friend, finally nailing hands and feet with huge spikes, and suspending Him from a cross until His life was spent. He couldn't bear another day in this city!

The thin light of dawn had appeared under the door. Night was finally over; today he would leave. Today he would run away, back to the only life he knew. Today Peter would leave this bloody city behind.

Bang! Bang! The nearby door shook as someone kept banging on it. Peter reached for his sword, and quietly took his place behind the door.

"Peter, John, it's Mary! Let me in."

It was a woman's voice, Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' close friends who had traveled with them for months. He unbolted the door and Mary slipped inside. She took several deep breaths before she could speak, then blurted out her message: "They've stolen the body! Jesus' body is gone, and we don't know where they've put Him!"

John, who was wide awake by now, looked at Peter, and then threw on his clothes. Peter was out the door running, running down the streets, tearing around corners, headed for the garden tomb where Jesus' body had been laid.

**The miracle of EASTER is that because Jesus didn't remain in the grave, we don't have to either! We don't have to suffer death, the payment for our sins in Hell, or eternal separation from God. He took that payment for us, and then rose in new life! And His new life can be inside us, giving us hope and peace, as we are filled with His love. He arose! And we were also born anew. Hallelujah!**

**—David Brandt Berg**

Now John was close behind. Younger and faster, John soon outdistanced Peter. By the time Peter got to the tomb, John was standing outside the door peering in. The huge stone, designed to prevent desecration of the tomb, was rolled away. Peter brushed inside. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the dimness of the damp limestone cave.

There was the linen gravecloth that had been wrapped turn after turn around the body. It lay on the chiseled stone shelf where the body had been. Yet now with nothing inside, its coils lay collapsed, empty, like a chrysalis after the butterfly has emerged. Folded separately was the cloth that had been around Jesus' head.

Peter looked at John and motioned him inside. How curious! If the tomb had been robbed and the body stolen, he would have expected the wrappings to be nowhere in sight. Or perhaps strewn in haste around the narrow stone room. Yet here they were, orderly, as if laid aside, no longer needed.

John looked at Peter. Peter looked at John. Peter could catch the faintest smile playing at the corners of John's mouth.

*What if ...? What if ... He is risen?*

Peter walked back into Jerusalem, but each step was a bit quicker than the one before. *What if He is risen?*

As Peter turned the corner onto the street where he was staying, he saw a figure waiting for him at the door. A *very familiar* figure—Jesus!

Peter *ran* to meet Him!

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## **Easter gives us hope**

Because Jesus was not claimed by death, not left in Hell, we also can escape death, and the awful feeling that we've done too many bad things, that there's no way things can now turn out good for us. In a word, Easter gives us hope.

We can fly like a beautiful eagle or a peaceful dove, arching high over the confines of life and our own selves. We can leave behind the torture of our own failures, our own inadequacies, all that's within us that holds us back. We can soar into the dreams

of our hearts, making reality out of what some call illusion. We can aim for Heaven's goals and, with God's help, make it to heights unknown.

Because of Easter, the hope of man is no longer limited to the realm of human possibility. Jesus died and then rose from the dead, so anything that *He* can do is now possible for *us*, too. We only have to look into His eyes and believe, and the miracle of Easter can be ours too.

**—Karen Bradford**