

## THE WITNESS BORN BY THE EMPTY TOMB (1)

BY KEITH GREER

A few years ago, while on a preaching trip to the Philippines, I witnessed something I had never seen before during the Easter holiday. A man there had himself nailed to a cross—for a much shorter period of time than Jesus, and under a doctor’s supervision—and then had a mock burial. This was followed by a resurrection at dawn on the following Sunday morning. Sadly, such fanatical regard for Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection has obliterated its real meaning and power. The religious devotion to rituals and Lenten practices—Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, and finally Easter—is foreign to the pages of God’s word. These rituals all came from men—not God. Their observances are rooted in pagan practices and borrowed from heathen sources.

Is Christ’s resurrection important? Absolutely. But, all of these so-called religious observances do nothing to uplift the importance of the truth concerning it. Listen to Paul’s words in his letter to the Christians in Rome, “*And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*” {Romans 1:4} In his letter to the church at Corinth {in 1 Corinthians 15}, Paul again discussed—in great detail—the resurrection’s importance. It was God’s powerful point declaring His Son’s Deity. Christ’s resurrection was absolutely essential to our relationship with God. “*But also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*” {Romans 4:24,25} Every spiritual blessing we enjoy in Christ hinges on His resurrection from the dead! Let’s consider the significance of the **witness born by the empty tomb**.

**The Open Sepulcher.** “*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.*” {John 20:1,2} Infidels and agnostics have denied Christ’s resurrection and offered differing arguments to refute it. Not one of them has been convincing; there is no supporting evidence. How does a person explain the open tomb where Christ’s body was buried? The rulers paid and secured the guards to lie and say the disciples came and stole the body by night. Such a story again flies in the face of actions by His disciples when He was arrested in the garden. What did they do? They fled, Matthew 26:56. Did the disciples now get the courage to break the Roman seal, a certain death penalty by the Romans, and steal the body? Sadly, this is just

another attempt for the Jews to deny the truth of the matter—He was raised from the dead just as He had predicted before His death!

Remember, Jesus' enemies approached Pilate about the possibility of such a situation. *"...Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first. Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard."* {Matthew 27:63-66} Even the women, who came to the tomb early on Sunday morning expressed concern regarding who would roll away the stone so they could finish the burial preparations for Jesus' body. *"And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us? But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large.'" {Mark 16:3,4}* The guards would not have removed the body because they would have broken the Roman seal—a crime punishable by death! Who opened the tomb?

*"And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men."* {Matthew 28:2-4} The story they told—had no merit; God told the truth of the matter! \*\*\*