

## Jesus Has the Final Say

A long time ago Job said, “*Therefore, I wish that my words were written! I wish that they were inscribed on a scroll!*”<sup>24</sup> *I wish that they were engraved for ever on rock with a stylus of iron and lead!*”<sup>25</sup> *I myself know that my Redeemer lives and that at the last He will stand on the dust.*”<sup>26</sup> *After this, my skin will surround this body, and from my flesh I shall see God*” (Job 19:23-26).

These words of the prophet Job, where he expresses his confident hope in Christ’s resurrection, serve us well this fine Easter day. Today is the day that our Lord triumphed over death and the grave for us. Though He died, yet He lives. Because He lives, we shall live also. The empty tomb we celebrate today shows us that Christ, not death nor the devil, gets the final say.

The Book of Job is not always high on the list of books of the Bible that we love to read. That’s partly because of its length and partly because a large portion of it is poetic. These make it harder for us moderns to dive into it than, say, Luke or Acts. Most of us, however, are familiar with Job, especially the opening chapters. In just the first chapter, Job, who was a righteous and faithful man, lost his seven sons and three daughters. Job was also a wealthy man who lost all his sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys, and beloved servants. In just a short course of time, Job lost everything that he had and loved. They all died. The temptation for Job throughout the book is to doubt God’s goodness and allow death and the devil to have the final say. Job’s friends and even his wife pester him to believe this.

It’s a temptation we share, as well, to think that death is the final authority. We think that we’re all going to die, and there’s nothing we can do but wait and accept our fate.

The women had accepted it when they went to the tomb. After all, it had been three days since they saw, with their own eyes, Jesus die on the cross. The reason they went to the tomb was to perform one last act of love for their Master. They were going to anoint His body with oil and spices to cover the stench of death’s decay. Jesus’ promised resurrection wasn’t on their minds – only the large stone blocking the entrance to the tomb and who was going to move it for them. They had accepted Jesus’ death – that death would claim Him just as it does everyone else – and now they only worried about how to get to His dead body.

When they got to the tomb, though, what did they find? They found that the stone had been rolled away. Going into the tomb, they found that it was empty, except for a young man sitting on the right side – an angel. The angel said to them, “*Do not be amazed any longer! You are looking for Jesus from Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here*” (Mark 16:6) In other words, their ideas about who had the final say in all things were incorrect. It is true that Jesus did die. The death He died, He died as the once-for-all-time payment for our sins. But death could not hold Him, and it didn’t get the final say. The empty grave shows that it belongs to Jesus. He did battle with death and the devil for us, and burst forth triumphantly from the grave.

Job, for his part, was a prophet. By His grace, the Holy Spirit gave Job to see Christ’s resurrection and the great blessing that comes through it. You see, when Christ rose from the dead, He took away death’s fearsome fangs and claws. Death no longer has the power to enslave because Christ tripped the snare, but He didn’t do it just for Himself. The Scriptures say that those who are joined to Christ by Baptism and by faith are joined to His death and resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus means the resurrection of those who believe in Jesus, such as Job. Job knew that, even after everything else wastes away, Christ gets the final say. And what does He say? To us, He says, “Life.”

This is what we celebrate today. God is on our side; what can death do to us? Jesus did die; this is true. He died on the cross as the payment for our transgressions. But, today, He rose. His resurrection shows that our sins are paid for and that death no longer gets the last word. That belongs to Jesus who, by His death and resurrection, makes our death but the gateway to eternal life in Him. By His resurrection, Jesus removes death’s sting. It is still bad; it is still the punishment of our sin, but we no longer need to fear it. We remember the words of Psalm 118:17-18, “*I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has disciplined me severely, but has not given me over to death*” (118:17-18).

The empty tomb shows that our Lord, not death, gets the final say. After three days, He burst forth from that dreadful prison and left its bars shattered for those who are in Him. When He returns, He will give eternal life to mortal bodies and we shall live with Him forever. Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed. Alleluia!