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### ***How Big is Easter?***

Peter Hiatt @ The Sanctuary Downtown  
EASTER – April 4, 2010

Happy Easter.

Every year, I struggle to know what to say about Easter.  
I mean, what is it really?  
And why does it matter?

Well, we know it's the day that we celebrate the fact that Jesus rose from the grave.  
And that's cool!  
And yet, that's **1 guy** rising from **1 tomb** at **1 moment** long ago.

#### **[holds up a dowel rod]**

Imagine this dowel is a time line stretching from the beginning of time until now.  
If the world is 15 billion years old, then Easter is just one moment here at the end of the line. Even if you're one of those people who believe the world is only 10,000 years old, Easter is just one moment toward the end of the line.

What difference does it make for everyone else on the line?  
Before and after?  
Fred Flintstone and George Jetson?

Easter was a long time ago, and on the other

#### **[holds up a globe]**

Here's Denver ... and here's Jerusalem.  
What difference does Easter make on the other side of the earth?  
Or even more importantly, *under* the earth?

Solomon wrote that we all go to one place: *Sheol*.  
Ecclesiastes 3:20 – “*All go to one place. All are from dust, and to dust all return.*”  
Ecclesiastes 9:10 – “*There is no wisdom in Sheol – to which you are going.*”

Many Bibles translate *Sheol* as “Hell.”

The Hebrews believed Heaven (the sky) was actually full ... full of life ... and the earth below was actually empty – empty of life, light, and meaning.

Amazingly, physicists are now saying similar things – that matter is most empty and space is most full. Like earth is an empty dark bubble floating in a sea of light and substance.

Well, Easter was one moment in time, in one location, on the other side of the earth, and it happened to one guy.

Statisticians estimate that the number of people who have ever lived on planet earth is something like 106 Billion. That's 1 dude out of 106 billion. Then religious types say, "Maybe it could happen to you ... maybe."

Well, everybody dies; and so far, in our world, only 1 has walked out of the tomb and stayed out of the tomb.

Everybody dies and every moment dies.

It's like Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:11 – "*While we live we are always being given up to death.*" To live in time is to constantly die ... every moment dies.

In my bedroom closet, there are 10 big boxes of moments – 9 boxes of pictures and 1 box of videos. 10 boxes into which I'm scared to look, and so really haven't looked ... because the moments are gone. They've passed. They're dead.

Last week, I watched one video for ½ an hour, and this is what I found:

**[video clip – Peter's kids #1]**

That was one evening in 1995. There was so much **life** in that moment, and now it's gone. It was so good, and now I ache just watching it. My two oldest are in college, and Becky is graduating ... and Coleman doesn't need a whoopee cushion to make that sound anymore.

My dad was also on the tape ... I watched a little further and saw this:

**[video clip – Peter's kids #2]**

See? Even the Pastor's kids are confused about Easter. What difference does it make?

**[video clip – Peter's kids #3]**  
***(Becky is crying over a good thing she couldn't keep)***

See? Death isn't something you experience once, but every moment in time. You know, the thing that makes a moment good is the life, light, and love in that moment.

Yet those things seem very fragile and limited in this world of ours.

Like flowers that have been cut – they look alive, but they're dead.

Like a body that's bleeding out – alive, yet dead.

Goodness is like fruit that's been plucked from some amazing tree. It's so good, but the day you eat it, it dies and you die. Goodness dies, or perhaps never was.

Part of what makes those videos so painful was that I was working 70 hours a week, and had so few of those moments. I feel like I failed, and even all that hard work failed.

Well, whether it's the Good, or the absence of the Good (which is evil), it all feels like sorrow now. For in this world of space and time, everything dies.

The new gets old, and so we hang onto the old and try to keep it new. We take pictures, make videos, and hang onto trinkets and nostalgia.

We make our house a home:

This is an ashtray I made my dad in second grade. He never smoked, but kept it on his dresser for 35 years.

This is a picture my son drew for me one Easter.

This is a shark jaw from our family vacation to Rodney Point.

This is my son Coleman with his potty chair stuck on his head.

It's all stuff from my office in my home.

This **[picture]** is the home I grew up in. This **[picture]** is that house now. 6875 S. Prince Circle, Littleton.

This **[picture]** is the home I took these videos in. This **[picture]** is that house now.

This **[picture]** is my home today. Becky is leaving for college in a few months.

They say, "You can never go home." But we try.

That's why we put locks on the doors ... to guard the good.

That's why we build walls around our cities.

That's why we form armies and go to war –  
to hang on to whatever good we think we possess.

But whether it happens fast or slow, in this world, everything dies and you cannot go home.

**[video clip – destruction]**

Everything comes to an end.

So what if 1 guy, in 1 spot, on the other side of the earth, at 1 moment, 2000 years ago, walked out of a tomb? ... SO WHAT?

Well, for the last 5 months, we've been preaching through the gospel of John. So I thought: "Let's ask John." It appears that John was the only disciple who went to the tree and watched Jesus die. And John was the first to believe. John had the most profound resurrection experience of all the disciples. (We forget that's what it was – but that is what it was)

Well, when John watched Jesus die, what died, according to John?

#1. His Best Friend

A world of good moments. John called himself "The disciple that Jesus loved," not because Jesus didn't love others, but because the Love of Jesus was his world. His best friend, and ...

#2. "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14)

The way died, and so all were "lost."

The Truth died, and so everything was a lie.

The Life died, and so all died – all creation was like a cut flower, like a body bleeding out, like fruit plucked from some tree.

#3. The Light of the World (John 1:8-9)

And I don't think John meant it as a metaphor.

When Jesus was crucified, a great darkness covered the earth.

When Jesus died, the Light died.

Physicists tell us that time is relative to the speed of light, and that at the speed of light (the speed of Jesus), past, present, and future are all present realities. It's like a photon of light is eternal... like Jesus is eternal. He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM."

He is above, below, before, after, and all around this time line. He said, "I am the Beginning and the End." He is Light, and His movement in this world defines time. So when Jesus died, time died. Or perhaps, "It is finished." Time is finished.

#4. The Word died (John 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, and all things were made through Him.")

All things... all space is sustained by God's Word.

So when the Word died, all space died.

And I don't think John meant it as a metaphor.

Darkness covered the earth, and the earth shook.

Physicists now say that all space and matter are like vibrations of meaning on superstrings ... like words. Word is "Logos," which means "Reason, Logic, Meaning ... the Plot." The Plot



why we go to war,  
why we nail Jesus to the cross.

We want what He is – we want Light, Life, and Love.  
We want to possess the Good in all our moments.  
But all good is God's good, and all sin is stolen good.

Every time we sin, we take the good ... we take God's life upon the tree.  
WE TAKE IT – Body broken and Blood shed.  
But  
GOD GIVES IT – Bread and Wine.

That's forgiveness.

To let someone TAKE the good when it is your good is forgiveness.  
And to bring back the good which is not your good is confession and surrender, called Faith.

John writes, "*Jesus is the Lamb who bears away the sin of the world.*" It's like He gathered all the stolen fruit in the entire world, and then went back to the garden and surrendered everything to God, His Father, on that tree – that's faith.

John tells us Jesus was crucified in a garden on a tree (skulon). That's faith.

You see, Jesus is forgiveness for us, and He is faith rising within us.  
He died for the sons of the whole world, writes John. That's forgiveness.  
And now He is risen, and yet still rising in us as Faith.  
Through Faith we surrender our world – all our moments – to our Father at the tree.

If we are joined with Jesus in a death lie His (surrendering all), "*We shall surely be joined with Jesus in a resurrection like His,*" writes Paul.

Jesus came to die for us and with us, and then give everything to us, as Grace. (Not as the Good we've taken –which is death- but as the Good we're given.)

Now, I know I just got a little esoteric... so if you've checked out, check back in.

When John saw Jesus die, he saw everything go into that tomb.  
And when John saw Jesus rise, what did he see come out of that tomb?  
Well...

#### #1. His Best Friend

And you see, that makes quite a difference.  
When stuff won't stay dead, you want that stuff to be your friend.

The scariest phrase you can hear in a movie is: "IT'S ALIVE!"

Yet, the happiest phrase you can hear is: "HE'S ALIVE!"  
Do you see what a gift it is to come to know Jesus before that day?

His best friend, and ...

#2. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

The Source.

Like the stem for every flower, the blood for every body, the branch for every fruit and vine.

#3. The Light.

And that means time – all of time, every moment from beginning to end or end to beginning.

He is the Beginning and End, and that means He has the power to do this:

**[video clip – "destruction" played backward]**

But He doesn't only have the power to reverse time, He has the power to make every moment new; to make the old eternally new.

When He died on the cross, He cried "It is finished!" And John comments, "All was finished ... *telestai* ... accomplished." Not like all moments were over, but all moments had reached their perfection and purpose ... eternally new.

At the cross, eternity invaded time, and through faith, eternity invades your time; so you're not stuck in the past and terrified by the future, so you can live NOW. Eternity touches time now. According to John, faith is eternal life NOW.

That's a lot to ponder...

But John saw all time enter that tomb, and all time come out.

So when is Easter? Easter is always happening.

And ...

#4. John saw the Word that upholds all things, risen from the dead.

So where is Easter?

Easter is everywhere – even the places that seem like nowhere. Places like *Sheol*.

The prophets prophesied that one day the whole earth would be filled with Glory. Isaiah said he saw the whole earth filled with Glory.

In Ephesians, Paul tells us that Jesus descended into the depths of the earth, that He might fill all things ... and He is Glory.

He descended into all our moments. Even our darkest moments. Especially our darkest moments. For “the Light shines in the darkness,” wrote John. And “where sin increased grace abounded all the more.”

There was no place darker and no sin greater than the moment the children of Adam took the life of Jesus on the tree. But there God gave the life of life of Jesus on the tree, and the moment of darkest evil became the moment of greatest good.

So that in 1 space at that 1 time, the glory of God invaded all space and all time.

As C.S. Lewis writes, “All moments that have been, or shall be, or were or are, present in the moment in the moment at His descending.”

As Julian of Norwich heard the Lord say: “Since I have turned the greatest possible harm into good, it is my will that you should know from this, that I shall turn all lesser evil into good.”

When Jesus died, everything died, because Jesus died everyone’s death, in every moment of death, that He might rise and fill all things with Himself: Way, Truth, Life, Light, and Meaning – The Good.

So ...

#### #5. Maybe we can go home

Perhaps the greatest of all resurrection appearances was when Christ appeared to John, exiled on the island of Patmos. By that time, John had seen just about everything die, and Jerusalem destroyed. Jesus appears to John, blazing with Glory, and John falls as though dead until Jesus touches him, saying “Don’t be afraid, John ... it’s me.” To John He reveals the meaning of space and time (which is Himself).

Then, in Revelation chapter 21:1, we read this:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth (that’s everywhere that’s anywhere); for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (The old made forever new. John’s home made forever new. It’s the form of Old Jerusalem made by people and the work of their hands (tabernacle), but it’s the New Jerusalem, made by God and the work of His hands.); and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Hear that, Becky?), and death shall be no more (there is no “endless death”), neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”*

It’s not like it **might** happen; it’s not simply that it **will** happen; but more like it already **has** happened: “It is finished – it’s done!”

**[verse 5]**

*And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also, he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."*

See? There is an Old Jerusalem in space and time, and there is a New Jerusalem – finished and eternal – and yet coming down into space and time. Scripture says, "The Jerusalem above is our mother."

See? There is an **old** 6875 S. Prince Circle in Littleton, Colorado, imprisoned in death, decay, and time... And there is a **new** 6875 S. Prince Circle in a new earth with my forever new Dad enjoying the garden in the backyard – no longer a slave to time but a master to time.

See? There is an **old** 478 Somerset drive in Golden, and a forever new 478 Somerset drive in the New Golden. And in that house, I am enjoying an eternal whoopee cushion with my four children, and they are putting on an Easter play... but they know to the depths of their being what Easter means... and Becky is cute as ever, but her tears are gone, and her sorrow has turned into joy.

See? Everything good in that old house was the presence and promise of that eternal house, and everything dark or evil was a preparation for the manifestation of God's Glory – which is Grace.

See, the good moments and bad moments are forever filled with Light, Life, Meaning, and Grace – filled with Jesus. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream."

In the last book in the Narnia series, the children are drawn into the Eternal Narnia from the Old Narnia through a stall door. Lewis writes:

"It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: "I have come home at last! This is real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now."

John saw his home risen from the dead and filled with Glory.

In Revelation 21:8, Jesus says to John: *"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. (That's the payment – that there is no payment. It's Grace ... it's all free.) He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. (I John 5:4 – John writes, "Everyone born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that conquers the world – our Faith." Faith is Jesus Christ rising in us.*

*But for the cowardly (like Peter before Easter), the faithless (like Thomas before he put his hand in Jesus' side), the polluted, as for murderers (like John, the Son of Thunder, who wanted to burn an entire Samaritan village), fornicators (like Judah), sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire, and the lion (translated "Sulphur" or "Divinity" ... it's the same word).*

“They will have their part in the lake that burns with fire that is Divinity, which is the second death.”

Now, we just read: “Jesus makes **all things new**.” So, these people are not things (just shadows of things), or they are just not yet made new... which doesn’t mean that Jesus still can’t make them new, or hasn’t already made them new in the eternal city.

Jesus said he came to “cast fire on the earth.” His Love is Fire... when we resist it, it burns. When we surrender to it, it fills us with Glory, and we enter the city.

### [verse 9]

*Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues (They were blood that burned like fire – the severe mercy we call suffering), and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And in the Spirit, he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.*

*It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates (Names like “Judah, Simeon, and Levi” – former liars filled with Truth). And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

John looked and saw names: Like Peter (the former coward) and Thomas (the formerly faithless) and John (the Son of Thunder).

#6. John saw John – A new John built into a city.

A city, a temple – God’s home.

We can go home, and God can go home. We are God’s home.

We build our cities in faithlessness and fear, and the whole time God is building his city with faithfulness and love. He’s building us.

John thought he built the city, so he shut the gates and made the walls thick to guard the good, and he went to war, full of violence – The Son of Thunder. But Jesus revealed that God built the city, and the city was John – the True John was a gift of Grace. So he was full of grace, and the gates were always open, and so the Son of Thunder **became** the Apostle of Love. That’s real thunder.

#7. On the Island of Patmos, John saw all things ... filled with Love,

And He wrote “GOD IS LOVE” ... and that’s thunder.

The great medieval mystic, Julian of Norwich, wrote:

God wants us to consider and enjoy love in everything. And this is the knowledge of which we are most ignorant; for some of us believe that God is all mighty and has power to do everything, and that he is all wisdom and knows how to do everything, but that he is all

love and is willing to do everything – there we stop. And it seems to me that this ignorance is what most hinders those who love God... We take this fear for humility, but it is foul ignorance.

Ignorance of Easter.

For you see, when we think Easter is small – just 1 guy at 1 time at 1 place on the other side of the world – we think Love is small, and we think redemption is small, and the Redeemer is small. So we think we must be our own redeemer. So we take the good and guard the good as our own good. We build walled cities that become prisons, and then we go to war. We create hell, and trap ourselves in that hell.

When we think Easter is small, our hearts become small ... small as hell.  
But when Easter is big, our hearts are big as heaven.

I may not yet see “All Things New,” but believing that my friend Jesus, who is Love ...  
... Believing that He makes all things new ... makes all things new in me ...

(“Anyone in Christ is a new creation,” wrote Paul. The new creation begins in me, through Christ born in me, through Faith rising in me.)

... When I have faith that He makes “all things new”, I surrender “all things” to Him at His tree.  
For He takes all my old things and makes them eternally new.

I surrender all the good moments in gratitude (they’re His), and I don’t have to fear or hang on ...  
and He gives them all back.

I surrender all the evil moments in confession, for He fills them with grace and gives them back in  
glory.

I surrender all the confusing moments to His Judgment, and He sorts the evil from the good,  
destroying the evil and purifying the good.

When I have faith, I surrender all my moments, for I know my God – who is Love – fashions those  
moments into the New Creation, our home.

All space and time is like an explosion in reverse, like a film run backwards.  
We surrender our broken moments, and with them God builds the New Creation.

*“This is the plan for the fullness of time,” (Ephesians) “... to unite all things in Him, making peace by  
the blood of His cross.”*

What I’m saying is this:

On the night that Jesus was given up, He took bread and broke it, saying, “This is my body given to  
you, take and eat.”

And in the same manner, He took the cup, and He said, "This cup is the blood of the Covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me."

Easter isn't just 1 guy out of 1 tomb in 1 moment long ago. Easter is an entire new creation, invading all space and time, right here, right now, through Faith.