

“Jesus’ Burial”
March 5, 2017
Mark 15:42-47

I. Introduction

At 3 pm on Friday afternoon, Jesus died. [John 19:30](#) described it this way, “When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” [Luke 23:46](#) adds, “Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.” With Jesus’ death, the hopes of many of His disciples, including the eleven, also died. From their viewpoint, it truly was finished.

The agony of the garden was over and the suffering on the cross was done. After all the busyness of the Passion Week, we come to a quiet time—the time when loving hands laid the lifeless body of our Lord to rest. The great atoning sacrifice had been made, and the dividing curtain had been torn apart. That is the meaning of Jesus’ cry, “It is finished”—all had been completed, the task had been fully done. But in God’s plan, the Easter story wouldn’t be done until the tomb is empty.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul gave 3 historical facts that make up the Gospel—turn to [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#). The burial of Jesus Christ was important. It proved that Jesus was really dead; it, also, satisfied prophesy—for example, when prophesying of His death in [Mark 10:34](#) Jesus said that the Gentiles would “mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.” To “rise” meant that Jesus had to be buried. Because of the importance of the burial of Jesus, all four gospels record it ([Matthew 27:57-66](#); [Mark 15:42-47](#); [Luke 23:50-56](#); [John 19:38-42](#)).

Jesus had been crucified as a criminal guilty for high treason. The bodies of such criminals were usually left to rot on the cross or they were thrown into a pauper’s grave. In rare cases the prefect of the province, in this case Pilate, might approve the burial of such a criminal. Complicating the issue, the hypocritical Jewish leaders, in keeping with Old Testament law found in [Deuteronomy 21:22-23](#) and because it was the Passover Sabbath, wanted all 3 bodies removed from the crosses

before the Sabbath day began. Knowing that the Romans would not remove the victims until they were dead, the religious leaders asked Pilate to hasten their deaths—turn to John 19:31-37. The actions of the soldiers may have seemed insignificant to them, but as John pointed out, their actions fulfilled prophecies from Psalm 34:20 and Zechariah 12:10. Following the deaths of Jesus and the two criminals, God's hand is seen in Jesus' burial beginning with the agents.

II. Jesus' Burial

A. The Agents God had prepared two agents, two men to take charge of Jesus' body for burial. Mark tells us of the first one, "As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body." Not much is known about Joseph of Arimathea, since he is only mentioned in Scripture in connection with Jesus' burial. Mark said that he was "a prominent member of the Council, i.e. the Sanhedrin." Luke 23:50-51 adds that he was "a good and upright man who had not consented to their, i.e. the Sanhedrin's, decision and action." Both Matthew and John describe Joseph of Arimathea as "a disciple of Jesus" (Matthew 27:57; John 19:38).

In John 19:39 John gave the name of the second agent, "he, i.e. Joseph, was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night." Earlier John 7:50 said that Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin. Like Joseph, Nicodemus had come to have faith in Jesus as his Lord. Both of these men had had high expectations regarding Jesus and the messianic kingdom, but when Jesus was crucified, those expectations must have taken a tumble.

B. The Request Motivated by love and sympathy for his Lord, Joseph "went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body." Joseph went boldly, with courage, since his actions could have severe consequences: the members of the Sanhedrin would probably expel him, Pilate may reject him or find a reason to take out his spite on Joseph, the hatred of the crowd may be turned on him as he took down the body from the cross, finally, after touching the dead body, he would be unclean on this special

Sabbath. When Joseph stepped into Pilate's presence, his power, wealth, and reputation were on the line.

Having been asked by the religious leaders to make sure that the crucified victims were off the cross before the Sabbath began and having ordered his soldiers to hasten the deaths, Pilate was waiting for confirmation when Joseph arrived. Mark wrote, "Pilate was surprised to hear that he, i.e. Jesus, was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph." With Pilate's permission, Joseph, along with Nicodemus, returned to the crucifixion site to attend to the burial of Jesus' lifeless body.

C. The Burial Mark wrote, "So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock." John 19:39-40 add more detail, "Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds or a hundred Roman pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs."

Obviously, what these two men did wasn't a spur-of-the-moment thing. They had to plan ahead. Since the shops would have been closed for Passover, they would have had to purchase the linen and the spices ahead of time—before Jesus' death. The tomb itself would also have to be prepared. And all the preparations had to be done without the council's knowledge.

Since the Jews did not embalm, "Joseph (and Nicodemus) bought some linen cloth, took down the body, and wrapped it in the linen." The body was wrapped using cloth strips that were packed with aromatic spices to combat the odors caused by decomposition.

After the hasty preparations for burial were done, they "placed it, i.e. the body, in a tomb cut out of rock." Matthew 27:60 explains that it was Joseph's own tomb and John 19:41-42 notes that it was located in a garden near Golgotha. In ancient Israel, as elsewhere, it was common for tombs to be reused. The body would decompose until only the bones were left. The bones would then be collected

in an ossuary and the tomb would become available again. But Joseph placed Jesus in a tomb in which no one had ever been buried. Then, in order to keep out unwanted animals or grave robbers, Joseph “rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.”

D. The Watchers Finally, there were some watchers. Some of the women who had been watching the crucifixion from a distance, including “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.” Luke 23:55 says, “The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it,” so perhaps there were other women as well. Scripture doesn’t say whether or not the women knew Joseph, or if they helped him and Nicodemus in Jesus’ burial. In any case, they knew where Jesus was laid.

Any skeptical claim that the women went to the wrong tomb on Sunday morning is easily disproved by the fact that the women had seen the tomb on Friday evening. Also, Joseph and Nicodemus, as well as the hostile Jewish leaders, knew which tomb was the right one so IF the women had gone to the wrong tomb, they could have easily been pointed to the right one.

The women watched Jesus’ body be interred in the tomb before returning to their homes that evening. As the sun began to set on Friday, they were beginning to prepare their own spice mixtures, which they planned to take back to Jesus’ tomb after the Sabbath. As we know, they were in for a shocking discovery.

III. Conclusion

There are a couple of things we can learn from Jesus’ death and burial. First, Jesus is the Messiah. In Proverbs 21:30 Solomon wrote, “There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.” Throughout Scripture, we see the absolute sovereignty of God displayed, but here in the life and death of Jesus Christ, the evidence is immense. God is able to control an infinite number of activities and behaviors so that all things, including people’s choices and actions, ultimately fulfill His perfect purposes; for example: Psalm 34:20 said that the Messiah’s legs were not broken;

Zechariah 12:10 that His side was pierced; Isaiah 53:12 that He was crucified with transgressor; Isaiah 53:9 that He was with a rich man in His burial; Matthew 12:40 said that His body would in the grave for three days. His tomb was sealed and guarded by His enemies, making it impossible for His disciples to have stolen His body, thereby affirming the truth of His resurrection. All of these are proof of the Messiahship of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is who He said He was, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Second, the same God who was able to orchestrate all the prophecies concerning Jesus, can direct all the things in each of our lives for our good. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” We just have to trust Him—as the familiar words from Proverbs 3:5-6 say, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” It’s up to you.

I’ve told this story before, but I think it bears repeating: *When our children were small, maybe 9 months old, we enrolled them in Tiny Tot Swim at the YWCA in Waukesha. In the beginning, they learned not to fear water and how to paddle around. As time went on, they eventually learned how to swim like fish. Early in their training, when they got old enough to stand, they would stand on the end of the diving board and would be asked to jump into the water to a waiting parent. There were some children who would stand at the end of the board but refuse to jump in—they may have cried or waved their arms in frustration and danced around or just got off the board, but they refused to jump. Others would come to the end and jump right in—sometimes before the parent was quite ready for them.* What made the difference? Some had faith in their parents, the others didn’t. So what caused some to have faith in their parents and others to have doubts?

So how about you and God—do you really have faith in Him? Are you ready to “jump” when He says, “Come.”? If not, what do you need to do to increase your faith? From what we have seen in

today's Scripture as well as the rest of the Bible, He's able to do whatever needs to be done, so really what holds you back? Isn't it like the children who lack trust in their parents, don't you need to know Him more to know what He is capable of doing?