

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 23:50-56

Reading: John 19:31-42

Parallel Passages: Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47 and John 19:31-42

Sermon #105
January 10, 2021

Jesus' Burial

Proof Of Jesus' Death (v.51)

We have moved through Luke's gospel and have reached the point where Jesus is taken down from the cross and buried. Although this seems simple and straight forward, it is important that we do not underestimate this event. It is not by mistake that all four Gospels contain the fact that Jesus was dead and buried. As we work through Luke 23, verses 50 to 56, notice with me the extent to which Luke goes and the detail he includes to assure his readers that Jesus is truly dead. Why 3 days? Partly because by that time, since they did not embalm, the body will be decomposing and smell – which is certain proof that Jesus was in fact dead. He did not pass out or swoon and recover as the enemies of God claim. Also, Jewish tradition believed the spirit stays with the body for a couple of days, so by 3 days the spirit had departed and He was most assuredly dead; physically and spiritually. Let's begin our time in God's Word with prayer.

You heard the detail of John's account of Jesus' death; bodies needed to be taken down from the crosses before sunset because at sunset began the Sabbath. Luke tells us in verse 51, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and most likely a Pharisee, ⁵¹ “who had not consented to their *(the Sanhedrin's)* decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. John account notes, ³⁸ “Joseph ..., who was a disciple of Jesus, but **secretly for fear of the Jews**, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.” (19:38) Mark's account includes, ⁴³ “Joseph ..., a respected member of the council, ... took courage and

went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ **Pilate was surprised** to hear that he should have already died. And **summoning the centurion**, he asked him whether he was already dead. ⁴⁵ And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.” (15:43-46) Joseph was a secret believer in Jesus as the Christ, just as Nicodemus, as John’s account reveals they knew each other. All the eyewitness writers of the gospel accounts want their readers to be assured that Jesus was indeed crucified, died and His dead body removed from the cross and placed in Joseph’s tomb. These things were the fulfillment of prophecy by Zechariah, where God said, “**I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.**” (Zechariah 12:10)

Paul may have been in Jerusalem on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion, we do not know, but by what he wrote in his 1st letter to the church in Corinth indicates witnesses of the crucifixion and burial related these facts to Paul, ³ “**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.**” (15:3-4) Paul testified Jesus was dead, buried and rose on the 3rd day and is eternally alive.

From these eyewitness gospel accounts and the epistles and the testimony of the hundreds of witnesses we know Jesus died and that the resurrected Jesus appeared to hundreds. The early church developed creeds for people to memorize and help them understand the core beliefs of Christianity. The Apostles Creed reinforced right thinking concerning God the Father, Jesus, His only Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is the 1st creed that was Trinitarian. A creed is simply a statement

of belief. This creed was written in the 2nd century and our oldest record of it is found in a letter written about 390 A.D. Please stand and recite with me the Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth
And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary
Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried
The third day he rose again from the dead
He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead
I believe in the Holy Ghost
I believe a holy catholic church; the communion of saints
The forgiveness of sins
The resurrection of the body
And the life everlasting. Amen.

Please be seated.

Creeds were meant to be memorized and used to reinforce right thought concerning the Christian faith. Remember at the time this creed was written few people could read. Now, to be clear I want you to understand when we say, “**holy catholic church**” what these words mean. The word “**holy**” means set aside from the world and dedicated to God. Notice the word “**catholic**” is not capitalized and means comprehensive or universal (it has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church) and the word “**church**” is not a building, but is the body of believers. So, “**holy catholic church**” means those dedicated throughout the world as the body of believers in Christ that live for God’s glory. The phrase “**the communion of saints**” is the body of believers coming together to worship worldwide as churches. Any questions?

Now back to Jesus, the cross and the tomb. The Jewish leaders paid off the guards to say Jesus' disciples took His body and He never rose from the dead. That was pretty creative, but it did not work. Others claimed Jesus was unconscious or had a heat stroke and then once He was placed in the cool tomb was revived. If you are going to deny the resurrection, come up with something better than these. All the apostles thought it necessary to report the fact that Jesus was dead and He was buried. He burial is proof that He was actually dead and the fact that the Jewish leaders had guards placed around the tomb says Jesus was dead.

Remember, according to the Jewish time schedule it is still Wednesday the 14th of Nisan. Jesus died on the cross around 3:00 pm in the afternoon. Now the race is on. Joseph of Arimathea and the others must move quickly if they are going to care for Jesus' body. They have less than three hours before the High Day Sabbath begins. The High Day is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and was considered a special Sabbath. The Feast of Unleavened Bread started 6:00 pm Wednesday night. Joseph rushes to Pilate and secures permission once the centurion, who had earlier said, ["Truly this man was the Son of God!"](#) (Mark 15:39) verified Jesus is dead. They hurry to take Jesus' body down and quickly do some initial preparations with the body, wrapping it in linen and placing it in the tomb of Joseph. There was no conspiracy by the followers of Jesus – He died and they placed Him in the tomb. All the conspiracies were brought about by the enemies of God and Jesus, His only Son because they only wanted a God that served them and their ambitions.

It is a historical fact that Jesus was crucified on the cross and died, and He was taken down and buried in a tomb. People do not have a problem with these facts. What they have a problem with is Jesus rose from the dead and is eternally alive because they want to live their lives as they see fit and not be accountable to

God. This is why they try so hard to disprove Jesus rose from the dead. However, history and hundreds of witnesses verify the fact Jesus rose – even a centurion of Rome who belonged the worshippers of the emperor as god and the enemies of Israel verified Jesus was the Son of God.

Hearts Revealed (v.50-51)

Luke reveals that Joseph had been a secret follower of Jesus, like Nicodemus. We know nothing about Joseph other than what we read in these brief accounts found in the 4 gospels. Reading at verse 50, “**Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man,** ⁵¹ **who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.**” Luke tells us he is a member “**of the council**”. That is the high council of Jerusalem and part of the Sanhedrin, which was the body that set all laws that were not Roman. We are also told he was “**a good and righteous man**”, which tells us, he was not caught up in the politics of Caiaphas and Annas. He along with Nicodemus were believers and did not consent to the council’s decision to murder Jesus. We do not know because of his beliefs about Jesus whether Joseph was invited to the secret meetings and kangaroo trial or if he was there and unable to persuade the council in their decision to move against the Messiah of God. Joseph “**was looking for the kingdom of God**”. Joseph had heard the teachings of Jesus and as a scholar of the Old Testament writings he saw how they all connected and he concluded Jesus was the Messiah. Joseph, like so many others was crushed by the death of Jesus and wondered how God would resolve that the Messiah was dead. Jesus’ death causes Joseph to move into action and he is secret no more, he openly approaches Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus. I am amazed at the sovereignty of God – placing a saved saint among the wolves so that the dead Jesus will be cared for. By being a member of the

Sanhedrin Joseph had access to Pilate. Joseph throws off the shackles of secrecy for the benefit of his Savior. Joseph no longer thought about his position and power, but acts to honor his Savior. By his actions he most assuredly would lose his prestigious position and soon as he walked the streets people would no longer look upon him with reverence. He could very well be shunned by his family and friends and if he did not have the means to independently support himself and his family, he would be forced into financial difficulty for no one would want to employ him. Joseph's decision to come out from the shadows into the light was a costly decision. As I thought about Joseph and his brave actions of that afternoon, I began to think of myself. What kind of believer am I? Does my behavior tell people I believe in Jesus as my Lord and Savior or do I have to tell them? Let me ask all of us here today – are we secret believers in the shadows for fear of our employers, family and friends? When we speak do people see the love, grace and mercy of Christ in us? Christ paid a great price that we might be His followers and the children of the Living God. What price are you willing to pay to bring Christ glory?

Truth Established (v.53)

Joseph with the help of Nicodemus “**came and took away his (Jesus’) body. ‘and they wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid.’** (Lk. 23:53) ³⁹ ‘Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight’”. (John 19:38-39 & Luke 23:53) Nicodemus brought 75 Roman pounds which is equivalent to 54 of our pounds. Paul confirms this happen as we saw earlier in his 1st letter to the church in Corinth, ³“**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in**

accordance with the Scriptures.” (15:3-4) We have the gospel writers and Paul going to great efforts to show beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus was truly dead so there would be no question in their reader’s minds as to what happened. Even Pilate carefully confirms that Jesus is dead. His soldiers in charge of the crucifixion confirm Jesus was dead, as John wrote,³³ “when they (*the Jewish leaders, members of the Sanhedrin*) came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.” (John 19:33-34) The pericardium is the membrane that surrounds the heart and it had filled with watery fluid which is a sure sign of death. When Pilate “learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.” (Mark 15:45) He placed Jesus body in the tomb and the women planned on coming back Sunday morning to finish preparing the body.

The apostles knew how important it was that Jesus had died to atone for all people’s sins. One of my heroes of the faith, the great preacher Charles Spurgeon said, *“If Jesus did not die, he has made no atonement for sin. If he died not, then he rose not; and if he rose not, then your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.”* Jesus death is essential to God’ plan of redemption and salvation.

As is Roman tradition when someone is crucified, they want it to warn anyone from considering to go against Roman rule. So, the body is left hanging and the birds and scavengers can dispose of the body over time. Jesus is different, He is taken down and He is buried and buried in a rich man’s unused tomb. This is what God spoke through His prophet Isaiah, from chapter 53, Isaiah wrote,⁹ “they made his grave with the wicked and **with a rich man in his death**, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:9-10) God had shown Isaiah the future; Joseph and his tomb. Amazing! For 3 years Jesus had

been schemed against and abused and humiliated and He suffered these things, so that, you and I might be saved, but at this point is history, at His burial His humiliation has ended. As Paul put into words for all to understand, ⁵“**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,** ⁶**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,** ⁷**but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.** ⁸**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” (Philippians 2:5-8) Christ is the Savior and He died for each of you!

Sabbath Timing (v. 54-56)

It was late Wednesday afternoon. According to John this Sabbath is not the weekly Sabbath which begins every Friday at 6:00 pm. But this is the yearly High Day Sabbath that begins on the 14th of Nisan, on Wednesday, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as John tells us, ³¹“**Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day).**” (John 19:31) Reading from Luke 23, verses 54 to 56, ⁵⁴**It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.** ⁵⁵**The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.** ⁵⁶**Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.**” According to Scripture once Jesus was very hastily laid to rest, either they quickly applied the “**mixture of myrrh and aloes**” and the women would return on Sunday morning to finish up or the “**mixture of myrrh and aloes**” brought by Nicodemus was set aside and was ready for when the women returned. At 6:00 pm it became Thursday – that is 1 day. So, Thursday, Friday (the weekly Sabbath) makes 2 days. Thursday, Friday and Saturday make 3 days. Sometime after 6 pm on what we call Saturday and the

Jews call the beginning of Sunday and early Sunday morning Jesus rose from the dead to live forevermore. This is the Scripture fulfilled. The traditional view of Jesus being crucified on Friday afternoon does not work, just as the wisemen did not arrive the night of Jesus birth but much later. As we learn from Matthew, Jesus is teaching, ³⁶“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. ³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, ‘Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.’ ³⁹ But he answered them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, **so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**” (Matthew 12:36-40) So at this point I say, “amen”, which means “so be it” or as God has said, so it is and man cannot change it. Amen.

Are You Hiding Your Faith

Have you ever known the right thing to do and failed to do it? Have you ever **not** done what you knew God wanted you to do and your conscience completely and utterly tortured you until you just had to do it? This was the way it was when God told me to leave my career and I fought with Him for 2 years. It is never a good idea to fight against God. I wonder if Joseph and Nicodemus felt the weight of being a secret disciple until there came a time when they could not stand it any longer and had to come out from behind the shadows? Reading from John chapter 19, ³⁸“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a

mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.” We know from John chapter 3 that Nicodemus came to speak with Jesus under the cover of darkness. We also know from the text we just read that Joseph was a secret disciple because he was afraid. At the time of Jesus’ death it seems, they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Perhaps God had worked His wondrous grace into their hearts and it was time no matter what happened to them, to come out into the light and reveal their commitment to Jesus Christ. No longer were they ashamed to be numbered among the followers of Christ.

Let me ask, “Are you hiding your faith? Other than Sunday morning, where it is safe, are you a secret follower of Jesus?” If so, it is time to come out of the shadows, just as Joseph and Nicodemus. If you are hiding or not living openly as a follower of Jesus – what are you afraid of? The world may be able to take your physical life as they did with Jesus, but they cannot take your soul. We will die physically but because Jesus rose from the dead, so will we. Just as boldly as Joseph and Nicodemus we no longer can be secret followers of Jesus, we must live unashamed of Jesus and we should each day unafraid for the world holds nothing for us. Turn in your bibles to Colossians chapter 3 beginning at verse 11. I close this message with the words of Paul, for those who have ears to hear, I say hear and obey. “Christ is all, and in all. ¹² Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all

these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” My beloved, say with me, Amen!