

THE BURIAL of the LORD JESUS CHRIST

Scripture References: Matthew 27:55 – 61; Mark 15:42 – 47; Luke 23:50 – 56; John 19:38 – 42
See also: Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 12:40; John 19:31 – 34; 1 Corinthians 15:1 – 3, 4

According to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 3 and 4, the burial of Jesus Christ is a key aspect of the Gospel message. Most of us have heard many things about the death of the Lord Jesus. *(Rightfully so!)* Likewise, we have heard much about His resurrection. *(Praise God!)* But, we do not normally hear as much about the burial of Jesus. However, as we study Jesus’ burial, we see that it, too, is full of glory and is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

In addition, Romans 6:1 – 6 tells us that we are united with Christ in His death, His burial and His resurrection. Although this is a spiritual reality, we see it symbolized through the ordinance of baptism.

The following will look at some of the key components and characters of our Lord’s burial.

EVENING TIME

Matthew 27 provides us with a definite timeframe for the day of Jesus’ crucifixion. Verse 1 says, “in the morning;” verse 55 says, “in the evening.” From reading this chapter in its entirety, we cannot help but stand in praise to God for all that the Lord Jesus endured on our behalf.

Scripture tells us that it was in the morning when the Lord was crucified; and that it was in the afternoon when He died. By comparing the Gospel accounts, we know that Jesus was crucified at the third hour and died at the ninth hour. (Mark 15:25; Matthew 27:45). In the way that we tell time today, we would say that at 9:00 a.m., Jesus was crucified; and at 3:00 p.m., He died.

According to the Jewish clock, evening was from 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. On the day that Jesus was crucified and buried it was the Preparation Day (the day before the Sabbath). It was on this Preparation Day that the Jews were commanded to prepare their food and to complete their work. The Sabbath started at 6:00 p.m. Unlike our new days, which begin at 12:00 a.m. (midnight).

In order for the prophecies and the law to be fulfilled, it was necessary that the body of Jesus be buried before the Sabbath day. (See Exodus 16:23 – 30; Deuteronomy 21:22, 23)

THE WOMEN

In the Gospels, the women are mentioned in regards to the burial of Jesus. These women loved Jesus and had followed Him since He started His public ministry in Galilee. Matthew tells us that they were “ministering to Him.” This would include providing food and other necessities that were needed by Jesus during His 3 ½ years of public ministry.

Luke 8:1 – 3 says, “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He (Jesus) went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.” (Matthew 27:56 names others that were there.)

We know that, except for John, the disciples were not at Calvary. (Matthew 26:55, 56; John 19:26, 27)

It is stated that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were at the tomb. They observed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as they took Jesus’ body down from the cross and as they buried Him.

After Jesus’ burial, they returned home to prepare spices and fragrant oils and planned to come back to the burial site, after the Sabbath.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

Joseph of Arimathea is unknown to the Bible reader until we are introduced to him in the account of Jesus’ burial. Arimathea was a city of the Jews. There is not much known about this city. But it was probably close to Jerusalem since that is where Joseph had purchased his grave.

More than anyone else, Joseph’s role was key in the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy regarding the Lord’s burial in Isaiah 53:9. After reading and comparing the Gospel accounts, we learn that Joseph was a good and just man. He was also a rich man. Although he was a prominent council member (of the Sanhedrin or supreme council of the Jews), Joseph had not consented to the council’s majority consent, decision and deed of crucifying Christ.

Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple (learner and follower) of Jesus. But, because of his position on the council, out of fear, Joseph served Jesus secretly. Nevertheless, he loved the Lord and was one who was waiting for the kingdom of God.

Joseph, a man of stature and held in high esteem, overcame his fears, went to Pilate and boldly asked for the body of Jesus; although Joseph was not a member of Jesus’ earthly family and had served Jesus in secret. Upon hearing the request, Pilate marveled that Jesus was already dead. Pilate consulted with the centurion and confirmed that Jesus was dead. Then he gave Joseph of Arimathea permission to have the body.

Joseph came to Calvary at evening time, before the Sabbath began, to take care of the burial of Jesus Christ, our Lord. This worthy honor has been recorded for us in Scripture.

NICODEMUS

We are first introduced to Nicodemus in John 3. He is well known for coming to Jesus “by night.” But, although it is not as well known, Nicodemus also was at Calvary. He came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes (about 100 pounds). Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea take the body of Jesus off of the cross, prepare it for burial, and then bury the body of the Lord.

THE BODY & THE BURIAL

Together, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus down from the cross. No doubt, this was not an easy task. But, it was a noble, honorable, and necessary task that needed to be done. The Romans probably (under Pontius Pilate) had some standard way of disposing of crucified bodies. These bodies were normally buried in a certain place for criminals. But, with the price of sin being now paid for, Jesus, who had done no violence; the spotless Lamb of God, had earned far better than that! He was buried in a rich man’s tomb!

The body of the Lord was wrapped in a fine clean linen cloth, along with the spices. We know the myrrh and aloes were brought by Nicodemus; the fine linen was purchased by Joseph of Arimathea.

Scripture tells us that Joseph of Arimathea rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb and then he departed. But, the women stayed there at the tomb.

Jesus, Himself, prophesied concerning His burial. In Matthew 12:40, He said, “For 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.”

**The burial of Jesus is a key component of the Gospel.
As Christians we believe and proclaim that:
Jesus Christ died for our sins;
He was buried;
and on the third day He rose from the dead!**