

“...He Was **BURIED**...”

1 Cor. 15:1-4

All four Gospels record the details of the burial of Jesus Christ (Mt. 27:57-66; Mk. 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42).

The Gospel is defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. The burial of Jesus' body is 1/3 of the Gospel message. However, sometimes it is treated as an minor detail. It is often overshadowed by Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection. Yet, the burial Jesus is an integral part of the Gospel message.

The burial of Christ gives testimony to the reality of His death and resurrection! How do we know Jesus actually died? We know because He was buried! How do we know He was resurrected? Because His grave is empty!

Two thirds of the Gospel (Good News) is BAD NEWS—Jesus died and was buried. Though the word Gospel means “Good News,” from the disciples point of view, the situation didn't look so good. They were slow to grasp the truth behind Christ's death (Mt. 16:21-23; Luke 18:31-34). All they could see was the One they dedicated their life to following, was dead and buried. It is only by His resurrection that His death and burial become “good news” (1 Cor. 15:17-19; Rom. 1:4)

God saw what the disciples did not see—Jesus paid the price of our sins! What Satan, the scribes, and the Pharisees meant for evil, God worked it out for the salvation of anyone who trusts Christ as their Lord and Savior.

This truth has a great practical application for us. Although the situation looked bad for the disciples at the time, it actually made a way for them to be saved in the end. Sometimes things may look very bad in our lives, but God will make them turn out for our good if we love God (Rom. 8:28). Never doubt the wisdom and workings of God in your life.

I. The PLEADING for Christ's body (John 19:38-40).

A. The CRAVING of the body (Mk. 15:43) [*“begged”* in Mt. 57:58].

- The word “*crave*” means to implore... to beg... to earnestly plead—Joseph would do anything to have it. Why?
 1. **What would happen to the body of Jesus?** Romans usually disposed of the bodies of crucified criminals by throwing them into Valley of Hinnom — a burning “trash heap” outside the city walls, known as “Gehenna.” Jesus used “Gehenna” as a picture of hell (Mk. 9:43-48). This is probably where the bodies of the two thieves ended up.
 2. If Jesus’ body were burned up, there would be no verifiable proof of His bodily resurrection.
- B. The CLAIMERS of the body.
 1. Joseph, likely a member of the counsel (Luke 23:50-51). Luke says he did not consent to their judgment against Jesus.
 2. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews (John 3).
 - Their clout was not something Pilate could easily ignore.
 - As far as we know from the Bible, no unbelievers touched the body of Jesus after His death.
- C. The CHARACTER of the claimers— Unsung heroes at the cross.
 1. **Nicodemus** went to considerable expense to provide the 100 lbs of spices (John 19:39). Evidently, what Jesus told him about being “born again” in John 3 made an impact in his life.
 2. **Joseph**—No mention is ever made of him until the time of Christ’s burial. But he is mentioned in ALL FOUR Gospel accounts pleading for Christ’s body.
 - ➡ **A rich man** (Mt. 27:57). He was wealthy enough to have his own tomb hewn out of rock. There is nothing sinful to have riches—It depends on how it is used. When money used for Jesus, it will be blessed.
 - Joseph is never recognized in the Bible for anything except one thing—Providing a grave for Jesus. Matthew 27:60 says Joseph laid Jesus’ body “*in his own NEW tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock...*” He saw an opportunity to use his wealth for the Lord and he did.

➡ **NOTE:** Who did Joseph prepare the tomb for? It is highly possible he prepared the tomb specifically for Christ in advance of His death. Consider...

1. Joseph was from Arimathaea, twenty miles from Jerusalem. He was probably in Jerusalem for the Passover. Why not prepare his own tomb in his hometown?
 - Most Jews wanted to be buried inside the Holy City, away from a place of execution. A rich man like Joseph could certainly afford a better site for his grave than beneath *“the place of the skull.”*
2. He was a **disciple of Jesus** (Mt. 27:57). Until now he was a “secret disciple” (19:38). The crucifixion that sent most of Jesus’ followers into hiding brought Joseph out into the open.” What Christ did on at Calvary gave him boldness—*“he went in **boldly unto Pilate**”* (Mk. 15:43).
 - The best way to motivate people to serve Christ is not putting them on a guilt trip or manipulating them. The best motivation is to show them what Jesus did for them on the Cross.
 - Being a “secret disciple” is sometimes prudent. Think of missionaries in China. Joseph was God's "secret agent" working covertly within the Sanhedrin!
3. He and Nicodemus were friends and knew the Scriptures. He was anticipating the coming of *“the kingdom of God”* (Lk. 23:50-51).
4. He had the tomb and the spices ready the moment Jesus died. They only had a couple of hours to get Jesus in the grave. No way could they secure a tomb and have 100 pounds of costly spices ready so quickly unless they planned in advance.

II. **The PREPARATION of Christ’s body.**

➡ A corpse must be prepared for burial.

- A. The PROMPTNESS (John 19:42; Mt. 27:57). Joseph did not have a much time to prepare the body for burial because it was near the end of the day and the next day was a Sabbath.

- B. The PROCESS (John 19:40). In Bible days, they generally wrapped the body and put strong spices in the wrapping to overcome the odor from the decaying body.
- The spices would prove Jesus was truly dead. If He wasn't, the spices, that were highly toxic, would kill Him.
- C. The PRICE. The cost of the things needed for the preparation (linens, spices) was not cheap. Are you cheap when it comes to giving to Christ?

III. The PLACE of Christ's burial. (John 19:41-42).

ARCHEOLOGICAL NOTE (*Halley, Bible Handbook*, p. 551-552): In 1881, General Christian Gordon discovered a garden at the west foot of Golgatha. After removing about five feet debris he found a tomb hewn out of the side of the mount dating back to Roman times. According to the fourth century church father, Eusebius, in 135 AD, the Roman Emperor Hadrian, built a temple of Venus over the tomb. Constantine later destroyed this temple in 330 AD.

Among the debris cleared from the tomb Gordon found a shrine-stone of Venus and traces of a building that had been erected over the site.

Further, in a vault adjoining the tomb, a tombstone was found, inscribed: "Buried near his Lord."

IV. The PROTECTING of Christ's grave (Mt. 27:62-66).

- A. The SUSPICION of Christ's enemies.
1. With the body of Jesus in Joseph's possession, now known as a disciple, they were suspicious of a plot to steal His body and declare Jesus to be raised from the dead.
 2. The Pharisees told Pilate if that happened, "*the last error shall be worse than the first.*"
- B. The SECURING of the tomb (vs. 65-66). They secured the tomb by doing two things.

1. They **sealed** the stone. That means they wrapped a cord around the stone and put an official wax seal on it. If the seal remained unbroken there could be no claim to a resurrection.
 - The size of the stone would make moving it difficult and keep people out (Mk. 16:3).
 2. They **set** a guard. The soldiers were sent to watch the tomb around the clock.
- C. The **SARCASM** of God in the protection.
1. The scheme backfired! The irony of setting a guard actually strengthened the proof of Christ's resurrection. In sealing the stone and setting the guard, they could not credibly prove that the body had been stolen when Christ was raised from the dead! It would have been better if they left the tomb unguarded!
 2. What the Pharisees and the priests had intended as evil, God worked it out for good. This is true of every circumstance in the life of a believer—whenever someone tries to hinder God's work, it ultimately will backfire on them.
 - The more Christ's enemies persecuted the church, the more it grew!

SUMMATION: Jesus' body would lay in the tomb for three days, he would come arise from the tomb on the third day as He said. [Next week we will see what actually happened during those three days.]

The primary truth the burial teaches us is Christ really did die, and was laid in a grave, to confirm His actual resurrection.

There is something else we should note. An effect of His burial is that we are also buried to sin. Our baptism pictures that (Rom. 6:3-4).

Baptism illustrates our union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection! As His burial showed He was actually dead. Likewise, our burial in the water (immersion) shows we are dead to sin and raise to walk in newness of life.