

Luke 23:50-56

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[0 : 0 0] Verse 50 through 56, as Luke writes to a man named Theophilus, whose name means friend of God, who would have in his lifetime called Caesar Lord.

You can imagine how confronted and challenged this man, Theophilus, would have been to, as we have just read through the words penned by Luke, to this friend of God.

As challenged as he would have been on the idea that now not Caesar, but Jesus is Lord. And how challenged he might have been to consider, am I truly a friend of God?

We see the challenge in these final verses, verses 50 through 56 of chapter 23 of Luke's gospel, as Luke decides to focus specifically, or should I say particularly, on a certain part of the death of Christ.

Because we often speak of the death of Jesus on the cross, which indeed we ought to make much of the cross, and we do. We glory in the crucifixion, where sins were bore by Christ.

[1 : 3 3] But that's on one hand. On the other hand, we look forward to the resurrection. The single greatest miracle that the world has ever known.

We extol and exalt the resurrection. But in between the crucifixion and this resurrection, Luke decides to focus specifically on the burial for a moment, for Theophilus.

And if you're thinking like Theophilus, what is the significance of the burial of Christ? And what does it mean for us? What's the significance and what does it mean for us?

The burial of Christ is so significant that all four writers of the gospel mention it. They all four have it. And the purpose, as identified by Luke, looking at the text, we see a man named Joseph from a town of Artimaueus.

It says he's a member of the council, the Sanhedrin. A good and righteous man, as John puts it, a disciple of Christ. Luke even adds a note in there that says he had not consented to what the Sanhedrin came up with, and namely crucify the Lord.

[2 : 5 0] He wasn't a part of that. He's a wealthy man, that's what's implied in verse 51. Some refer to him as the secret disciple. If you read the book of Mark, we see this.

Joseph is granted permission by Pilate to take the body of Christ down from the cross, to lay him in a tomb that Joseph has bought for his family just before the Sabbath began.

This would have been their Good Friday. This would have kept the Sabbath. Deuteronomy 21, 23. Do not let a body hang from the tree over the Sabbath.

We notice that Luke describes how the body was even cared for, wrapped in linen. Even the women, in verse 55, after seeing how the body was laid, they say, we should go get some oils and spices to prepare the body, most likely for embalment.

Even John 19 mentions a man named Nicodemus, who once came to Jesus before, joining the women, bringing the spices and the oils to prepare the body. And Luke ends with the Sabbath.

[4 : 0 5] Rest. What's the purpose of Luke's words for us this evening? First, that in the description of the body of Christ and the preparation for burial, this man, Jesus, is confirmed dead, just as the scriptures have foretold.

For any Jew, with the sacred writings of Isaiah, they would be thinking of Isaiah 53. And they made his grave with the wicked, that is, the two thieves on the cross, and with the rich man, that is, Joseph, in his death.

Although he had not done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth, yet it was the will of God to crush him. This is what is meant also by Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

I deliver you, to you, as of first importance, that what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with scripture, that he was buried, and he was raised on the third day in accordance with scripture.

This confirmation is a confirmation that the scriptures are true. But secondly, not just a confirmation of the scriptures, but we also see a verification by witnesses.

[5 : 21] For starters, Mark's gospel even mentions that Pilate sends a centurion just to verify that this man is actually dead. He comes back. Mark even goes on further to say they didn't break his legs because he was dead.

The soldier pierces him in the side just to make sure, because his life is on the line if he isn't dead. And again, even John lets us know that Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, all witnesses of this death.

Luke is letting us know that there is no hoax here. He really is dead. That with Christ, and what Christ has said, would happen, would happen, has happened.

And witnesses are there to verify that the man Jesus has truly died. But thirdly, not only is there a confirmation of scripture, not only is there a verification of witnesses, but Luke lets Theophilus know that the burial of Christ implies the validation from God himself.

There's a validation. Perhaps we get a glimpse of the hand of God in the fulfillment of scriptures, as even while Christ has died, he's still fulfilling prophecy.

[6 : 37] How's that for excellent execution? Maybe even Isaiah's words ring true to Theophilus, that it pleased the father to crush him, or perhaps even some mysterious way, the fact that the women never actually get a chance to apply the oil and spices to the body.

Maybe, verse 56, because this death is unique from any other death the world has ever seen. They don't need it. Because this man, if he's fulfilling scripture, the scripture will also imply that he will rise.

So no need for embalment. Ladies and gentlemen, we are witnessing three things concerning the burial of Christ. Burial is a confirmation of death.

This burial is a verification of death. And yes, this burial is a validation of death. But what does it mean for us in 2018, even in this room?

Paul picks up this idea, Romans 6, 4. Let me read it for you. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism unto death. In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life.

[7 : 49] The understanding here is that just as Christ's burial meant that he officially broke the power of sin, we too, like Christ, are now capable of cutting off our relationship and attachment to sin through Christ.

The seal of death is brought on because of death and burial with Christ. Christ, this likewise means that you have freedom and ability to walk.

As he says, in newness of life, you can walk with Christ. We as believers, we as believers are incorporated into the death of Christ, which means that we have died with Christ into his baptism. We were buried with him, signifying, signifying that the death of the old man, the death of this old nature, the death of that old life is true. It marks the end of the old life.

It marks the transition into the new life. Amen. Even our own confessions, even the Heidelberg Confession mentions this burial, testifies that he truly has died, just in case anybody got it twisted in Luke's time.

[8 : 57] No, he actually died. He didn't get his body switched for someone else. This Christ suffered the curse for his people. He proved that truly the wages of sin is death.

And he continues, Paul continues even to say in Romans 6, so that we can unite with him in a resurrection like his. Well, anyways, your burial in Christ is the confirmation that by the spirit of God, you truly are dead.

As the scriptures tell us, the old is passed away. Behold, all has become new. Take heart in that confirmation. Your burial, secondly, in Christ, is the verification by witnesses around you, or dare I say, your witness, that the universal body of Christ is actually brought to newness of life, that you indeed have made the good confession, and you are no longer a slave to sin.

And lastly, your burial in Christ truly is the validation by the Heavenly Father, the one that counts the most, that no longer has sin, no longer has dominion over you, death no longer has dominion over you, that now you walk in newness of life, that you can now consider yourself dead to sin, alive in God, in Christ Jesus, as Paul puts it, for those who are buried in Christ, this is what Good Friday means.

This is the means by which we can call Jesus Lord as Luke is trying to get across to Theopolis. And this is how you can be a friend of God.

[10 : 46] Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the new life. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much that it indeed did please you to crush him on our behalf.

So now we can walk in newness of life because if we have been baptized into him in a death like his, we shall certainly resurrect in a resurrection like his.

Thank you, Lord. Amen. Amen. The scriptures read, Then came the day of unleavened bread. Amen. Amen.