

The Burial of Jesus

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn back to the passage in John's Gospel that we read, and especially the words we have from verse 38 through to the end of the chapter.

We can read at verse 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.

So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. In the past six days, as you well know, here in the congregation we've had a number of deaths and related services each day of the past week.

We're very used to being at funerals, very used to the sight of coffins, very used to families experiencing bereavement, and sometimes inevitably it comes to ourselves as well.

Tonight we're actually at another funeral, because the Word of God is giving us a description of the funeral or the burial of Jesus. And as often is the case in our own case here, many people will ask, if you've been at a funeral, were there many there?

[1 : 28] And sometimes we say, yes, there was quite a lot of people there. Other times we say, well, not really just a handful, just a few. That's just how it is. Well, there weren't many at the funeral of Jesus Christ.

Some women, we're told in the other Gospels, who came and saw the place where they laid the body of Jesus. And as we find here, there were two men, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who took charge of the body of Jesus and prepared it for burial and laid it here in something of a hurry because of the nearness of that particular Sabbath.

They laid it in this new tomb where no one had ever yet been laid. And tonight we're going to try and take a few connections with the Lord's Supper from this particular passage, connections not only in regard to Jesus himself and what is involved as far as Christ was concerned, but also connections to ourselves by looking at those two men especially who came and asked for the body of Jesus and then treated it respectfully in this way and gave it a burial in this tomb.

And the first thing we want to notice, two main points really. The first of them is that here's information or a passage that tells us about a step from secret to open discipleship.

A step from secret to open discipleship. And then secondly, we have in the passage obviously the interment or the burial of Christ's body.

[3 : 15] But notice how John describes this first of all. The step from secret to open discipleship because here were two people who had a hidden allegiance to Jesus for a long time.

Certainly for a considerable time. And as these two men, Joseph is mentioned in the four Gospels with regard to his involvement in the burial of Jesus and is demanding from Pilate or going in to request the body of Jesus.

So each of the four Gospels referred to Joseph of Arimathea being here at this time. And here also we find Nicodemus, who also appears elsewhere, of course, in John's Gospel, as he reminds us here, who came to Jesus by night, as you find in chapter 3.

He came along with Joseph of Arimathea and it was Nicodemus who took with him the mixture of myrrh and aloes to actually apply to the body of Jesus prior to his burial.

Now both of these men were members of the Jewish ruling council, the religious council, also known as the Sanhedrin. And not only that, but they were well-to-do men.

[4 : 22] They were actually very well-off wealthy. Both of them wealthy men belonging to the Jewish council, a place of importance in the religious authorities of the time.

And yet both of them were disciples. Despite being rich people, despite being well-off, despite being members of the Jewish Sanhedrin, despite being part of the spiritual or religious leadership of the people at the time, they had become disciples of Jesus.

But they had not made that known. We're told here that they did not make it known that Joseph was secretly a disciple for fear of the Jews.

And it makes it all the more remarkable that this man who was afraid, if you like, understandably in many ways, to bring forth his allegiance to Jesus openly, and yet for all of that time that he had not done that, yet something here actually moved him to come out into the open and to take the body of Jesus, and along with Nicodemus, to give it a burial.

Incidentally, Nicodemus and John's Gospel is a very interesting study. Because you have, as it were, three stages in the references to Nicodemus.

[5 : 38] And where you find him in chapter three, just as John says here, who came to Jesus by night.

That tells you a lot about the condition of Nicodemus. It's not just telling you that he came there secretly, that he came there unnoticed. It tells you he was still in darkness. He was, as Jesus put it, as he interviewed him and spoke to him on that occasion.

He is a ruler of Israel, and yet he does not know what Jesus meant by being born again. Do you not understand these things? Yet you're a ruler of Israel. You're part of the council. Why don't you understand those things?

So he came by night. He came in the darkness of his soul, as well as the literal darkness of night, to cover him from the fellow members of the Sanhedrin. And then he speaks up, not necessarily fully in support of Jesus, but nevertheless in a partial support of him, at least in chapter seven, because those who had been sent out by the authority to take Jesus captive had come back without him.

And they were asked, why didn't you bring him? And the remarkable answer, of course, was nobody ever spoke like this man. Isn't that an amazing answer to that question? Why did you not bring Jesus?

[6 : 54] And their answer is, because nobody ever spoke like him. In other words, they were really saying effectively, how can you possibly bring into custody or captivity or actually try and lay hands on someone who has such an ability of speech as this man has?

They were afraid, because of the authority of his words, to lay hands on him. And that's when the Pharisees spoke up against those people who came back without Jesus and said that they just were part of the rabble.

And Nicodemus spoke up that no one should be accused without hearing him for himself. And they turned around to him and said, are you also of Galilee?

Do you belong to them? Have you come to join this group of followers of Jesus? So you see, there's the way that John fascinatingly tells us these little insights into the progress of Nicodemus, if you like, from his beginnings in the darkness through to his partial light, if you like, in John 7.

And now he's really out in the open along with his companion, Joseph of Arimathea. And there's a lot in that study itself for us, isn't there? But they had come secretly, understandably.

[8 : 08] And yet, really, at the same time, it's not something that's commended. And it moves now into an open allegiance on the part of both of these men.

Joseph seems to have taken the leading role. That's why it's surprising in a way he was obviously not too timid a man. He probably had some good reason for not coming out into the open. He would have been facing a lot of intimidation and threats from his fellow Sanhedrin members.

But nevertheless, here he is. He wasn't actually... It doesn't seem that he was present when they brought out the sentence of condemnation on Jesus in the Jewish council. Because we are told in one of the other Gospels, he did not consent to the sentence that had been pronounced on Jesus to be crucified.

He didn't consent to that. But now he comes into the open. But Mark chapter 15 tells us that he took courage. And he took courage specifically at this point.

And this is really the point we want to get to. He took courage at this point specifically in regard to the death of Jesus. The body of Jesus that was hanging on the cross. It's then that this man comes out into the open.

[9 : 23] It's then that his companion Nicodemus also comes into the open fully more than partially as he previously was. What was it that made them come out into the open?

Well, isn't it really obvious? It was in fact the cross. It was the death of Christ. The death itself. They have come to realize as never before what this means.

What the significance of this means. They have come to place such a value upon this death of this person of whom they are disciples. That they now cannot possibly stand by and let the body of Jesus hang on the cross.

So that he will be taken away as was the intention of course of the Romans. Taken away and dumped with the other two. Because that's what they did. He came.

He came. And he went into Pilate. And asked that he might take away the body of Jesus. He's no longer a secret disciple.

[10 : 27] He's no longer hidden as a disciple of Jesus. He's actually out into the open. And that's what really draws us as well, isn't it? Out into the open.

When we come to consider the cross of Christ. What it means to us. The value that we place upon it. What it is to be in our own experience. In our own life. In our own future.

In the present as well. What it means to us. You see the love of Nicodemus and of Joseph of Arimathea for Jesus.

Is made bold. By the very fact of seeing. Jesus. Dead on the cross. It threw out.

Their allegiance to Jesus. And so it does for ourselves. The love that really comes to value Jesus. The love that really comes to appreciate it personally.

[11 : 25] Is a love that comes into the open. To say I'm his disciple too. And I want to honor him. And that's what you do in the Lord's Supper. That's what you do when you come. To take communion as a remembering of his death.

Because however much indeed. The more you find. In as you do in the present time. This Jesus. And all that he stands for. And his cause. And his people. And his kingdom.

Under attack from so many sources. And so much ridicule heaped upon those who follow him. It's all the more then. Isn't it? Something that constrains us inward. As we appreciate his death.

As we value his death. We say well I can't actually. Simply let this go on. Being a secret disciple. Well I've got to actually join myself to those. Who have already openly come.

And stood by the cross. And taken his death. As the basis of their new life. That's what I am too. Isn't that the same?

- [12 : 26] In Mary in chapter 12. She had to face hostility. When she came with her. Little file. Alabaster.
- Bottle or file. Of precious. Ointment. Perfume. Really really valuable. And yet she broke it. And poured it. Poured it out upon him. And of course there was a murmuring.
- Among the disciples. Led by Judas Iscariot. What's the meaning of this waste? Why was this not sold? And given to the poor? It wasn't because he really cared for the poor. But he just found something to accuse this woman of.
- He was just grumbling over the fact. That Jesus had accepted this from this woman. What was she doing here anyway? Why was she wasting this substance on him? Well it was no wastage.
- And coming. To make your allegiance public. Is never a waste. It's never something. That.
- [13 : 26] Is other than. Meaningful. To Jesus himself. And that's really in a sense. What you do. In the Lord's table.
- As well at the Lord's supper. What represents the body of Jesus. The bread. And the cup with wine. Is really in a sense.
- It's the same. As Joseph of Arimathea. And Nicodemus. Reaching out. At the cross. Taking the body of Jesus down. And then taking care of it. Now we have to be careful. Because the bread is not.
- Turned into the body of Jesus. And neither is the blood. Anything. The wine. Anything other than wine. And the cup. But they represent. They are. A representation.
- For us. Through which God. Is pleased to bless. Mysteriously. But never the less. Really. The benefits of Christ's death. To us. As we take these. And by faith.
- [14 : 19] Feed and nourish our souls. Spiritually upon that. And in that way. We think spiritually. As we act physically. And as we think spiritually. And act physically.
- Therefore. We are in a sense. Doing the same. As these two men did. With respect to Jesus. And his dead body. We're reaching out. And we're taking in. And we're saying. This is precious to me. I need to show.
- That I love this Christ. That I love his death. That it's meaningful to me. That it's central in my life. And so they came.
- And they took his body. And treated it. With respect. The step from secret. To open discipleship.
- Is there anyone here tonight. To whom this is speaking. I think there is. Maybe more than one. Disciples.
- [15 : 18] But not yet openly. At least not to the extent. It should be. And it's. No doubt. The desire of your heart. That it would become.
- An open discipleship. Well don't think of yourself. Don't think of other people. Think of what Jesus did.
- And what Jesus in his death. Means to you. And let that draw. Your love forward. So that you too.
- Reach out. And take. And eat. And do this. In remembrance of him. The step from secret. To open. Discipleship.
- Secondly. The interment. Of Christ's body. Now it's interesting here. That John says. They took this. And in the place. His body. And in the place. Where he was crucified. There was a garden. And in the garden.
- [16 : 14] A new tomb. In which no one. Had yet been laid. In fact. We're told in Matthew. 27. That this was. Joseph's own sepulcher. He had actually had this.

Prepared. For himself. But it hadn't been used. It was not. Yet at all. Used. And therefore. That's referred to here. And it's important. That it's referred to.

Because. The fact that it's new. Is a significant. A significant detail. It means. For a start. That. Nobody else. Had occupied.

That chamber. Are. And so. When it came to. The resurrection. Of Jesus. For example. Nobody could say that. Ah. But that was somebody else. Who had been buried there. Along with him.

Or before him. And you can't prove. That it was actually Jesus. There was nobody else. Buried in that tomb. He was the first. And only occupant. And so.

[17:07] When he rose from the dead. Nobody could be. In any doubt. Whose tomb was that. Whose body had been laid there. It was his. And he's the one. Who rose from the dead.

On that momentous. Occasion. But you also. You also find that. The fact that it's a new tomb. And it's mentioned as such. It's in pristine condition.

If you can say that. About a tomb. Nobody's ever. Occupied it before. In other words. They are treating. The body of Jesus. As you would treat. A king.

As you would treat. A king. At his burial. Or a queen. It's royalty. To them. And he is dealt with. As royalty. Deserves to be dealt with.

Isn't it interesting. That you go to. Psalm 45. We didn't sing it tonight. But Psalm 45. Is very often called. A royal psalm. Because. It's about a prince.

[18:02] It's about a marriage. With a princess. It's about her. Leaving her household. And coming to be joined. With him. In fact. The language. Is very. Very similar. To the song of Solomon. And you can take from it.

That it expresses. A relationship. Between someone. Who is married. To this princess. And who takes her. To live with himself. And it's not wrong. To see in that. A description.

Or an emblem. Or an image. Of Jesus. And his relationship. To his people. As he calls them. To be joined. Or spiritually married. To himself. But you see.

That psalm. Those royal psalm. At verse 8. We're told. That his garments. Had the smell. Of myrrh. And cassia. And you wouldn't necessarily.

Think of death. When you're just reading. That psalm. But then you come. To this passage. They took the body. Of Jesus. They bounded. With the spices. They took a mixture.

[18:57] Of myrrh. And aloes. The very spices. Mentioned in psalm. 45. Because this is. Treating this body. As a royal body. It deserves.

To be treated. With the richest spices. In order to actually. Prepare it for burial. And it's applicable. To him. As. The death.

Of a king. You see. Jesus. Didn't just. Become. A king. After his death. And resurrection. From the dead. It's not then. That he.

Began. Exercising. What's usually called. The office. Of kingship. He always was. As a king. It's as a king. He came into the world. It's as a king. That he was born.

As to his human nature. And. In Bethlehem. It's as a king. That he. Walked around. In. The state of. Humiliation. In which he had put himself. Willingly. So that his glory.

[19:51] As it was. As the king of kings. Was not. Shining forth. Because of his. Incarnate state. Of servitude. But he's still the king.

Which is why. One of the Christmas carols. As we're familiar with. Really says. Asks the question. Who is he. In yonder stall.

At whose feet. The shepherds fall. Tis the king. Tis the lord. O wonder story. Tis the lord.

The king. Of glory. The lord. The king. Born. As a child.

That needs to be looked after. And the lord. The king. Walking through. The years of his life. As a servant. Of the father. Placing himself.

[20 : 47] Willingly. Under. The command. The father had given him. To finish this work. Of atonement. Involving so much. Suffering. And now. Involving the death. Of the cross. And it's therefore.

As a king. That he's buried. And it's as a king. That he rises from the dead. Showing his might. And it's as. The. God man.

King. That he ascends. To the throne. Of heaven. And rules there. Tonight. Over all things. They buried him. As a king.

Deserved to be buried. Whether they in fact. Knew. Or understand that. Or understood that. Fully. As much as we do. From taking all the scriptures together. We have that benefit.

But in any case. As you look at it. With all these scriptures. That you can take together. From old and new testaments. Such as. Isaiah 53. He made his grave. With the wicked. And with the rich man.

[21 : 42] In his death. Fulfilled so. Minutely. In the burial. That took place here. The interment of Jesus. Is. The burial of a king.

The burial of your king. Jesus. When you come. God willing. To remember tomorrow. The Lord's death. And the Lord's supper. You're not just remembering.

The death of one. Who was and is. A prophet. And reveals to you. The will of God. For your salvation. Not just revealing. Not just remembering. The death of one. Who was and is.

Your high priest. Who made. Atonement for you. Who is now making. Intercession for you. You're also remembering. The death of your king.

And his resurrection. And his ascension. To glory. As he himself prayed. To the father. In John 17. Now father. Glorify me.

[22 : 42] With your own self. With the glory. I had with you. Before the world was. That's who died. He died.

As the king. Through his human nature. Making that possible. The new tomb. But then they buried. Jesus there. Now notice how.

The passage ends. Because of the Jewish day. Of preparation. Since the tomb. Was close at hand. They laid. Jesus there. And if you compare that.

With the other gospels. You'll find the other gospels. Say they laid the body. Of Jesus there. Why doesn't John say. They laid Jesus there. Because. When you find. The composite picture.

You actually come to the conclusion. That it's not just simply. A body that they're laying there. John is telling us. This is the body of Jesus. And what he's really saying is. They laid Jesus there.

[23 : 40] It was a dead body. It was a corpse. He had really died. Physically. But yet. John says.

They laid. Jesus there. Why does he say that? Because. I think it's because. John wants us. As he often does. In this. Great. Gospel. To identify.

This person. Whose body is that? And therefore. Who experienced death. On the cross. So as to leave. The body behind.

For it to be buried. And given. A decent burial. The son of God. God himself. In the person. Of his son. Came and took out. Human nature.

And it's that person. Of the son of God. The second person. Of the glorious trinity. That actually himself. Experienced. What it is like. To have. A soul and body.

[24 : 34] Separated in death. And still united. To his person. Remember that. The human nature. Of Jesus. Is not what describes.

The person he is. A human nature. Is not. A person. As you look at Jesus. The person. Of Jesus. Is. The son.

Of God. God. And everything. He does. Since taking. Our human nature. And joining it. To his divine nature. He does. As the son of God. Including his death.

Deity. Cannot die. Deity. Is the author. Of life. Deity. The life. Of God. As God. Is not subject.

To death. Itself. That's why. It took. The son of God. Took our nature. As a human nature. To himself. To be joined.

[25 : 30] To his person. And you have to say. This is. The body. Of the son of God. This is Jesus. Experiencing.

What death is. Because. As the body. Is laid there. John. Wants us. To be very clear. That this. Is in fact.

Jesus. The son of God. Who is there. And then. Experiencing. As his body. Is laid to rest. And as his human soul. Is elsewhere.

With God. He. As the son of God. Is indeed. Experiencing. That separation. And what it means.

For himself. You remember. You remember. The short catechism. Following. The teaching. Of the Bible. Itself. Jesus himself. Of course. Said in Matthew 12.

[26 : 27] As Jonah. Spent three days. In the belly. Of the great fish. So must the son of man. Be three days. In the heart. Or in the bosom. Of the earth. Referring to his burial.

And the catechism. The shorter catechism. Remember. Asks. In what does the state of humiliation. Christ's humiliation.

Consist. And it says. Christ's humiliation. Consists of. And it. Number. It refers to a number of things. But then it also includes this. And.

In. Being. Buried. And continuing. Under the power of death. For a time. Because the state of humiliation. For Jesus. Was not just. Inclusive of his death.

On the cross. It had to include. This detail. That he was buried. That his body was laid. In the tomb. And this is Jesus. This is his body. This is his experience.

[27 : 24] As his body is laid. In this new tomb. And that's why we remember him. As we do. Do this.

He said. In remembrance of me. As often as you. Eat this bread. And take this cup. You remember that. The death of Jesus. Is an entire death. It's not just.

A physical death. It's also. A spiritual death. Remember. Death is. Essentially. Separation. As God said to Adam. The day you eat of this fruit. You will surely die.

And. It's immediately obvious. What that death. Actually means. He goes to be separated from God. He goes to hide from God. If he could. And God actually.

As we saw. Very recently. Drove them out of the garden. It wasn't an appropriate place. Anymore. For them. Now the death. That come into the experience. Into their lot. Death.

[28 : 20] And that's. Where you find. That Jesus. As he died. Experienced all aspects of death.

Every aspect of death. And there are three aspects of death. There's spiritual death. Which is separation from God. There's eternal or everlasting death.

Death. Which is separation from God forever. Which essentially is what hell is. And there's physical death. Which is the separation of our soul. From our bodies.

Jesus. Experienced. All three. All three. All three dimensions. Or aspects of death. And not only did he experience them. He experienced them.

All in their entirety. As death. My God. My God. Why. Have you forsaken me. That spiritual. And eternal death.

[29 : 21] In the soul. Of the son of God. In our nature. Do this. In remembrance. Of me.

Now you remember. We had. Occasion to look at Genesis. Chapters 1. 2. And 3. Recently. And if I remember rightly. We finished our last study. By thinking of the three gardens. That you find in the Bible.

The first garden. The garden of Eden. The last garden. The garden of heaven. As it's described. Although it's a city. As well. It's described as a garden. In the book of Revelation. And then we.

Mentioned at the time. That this garden. Here. In which Jesus was buried. Is the third garden. The middle garden. The one in between. If you like. That joins the other two.

And what you've seen tonight. You can see that. In that first garden. Where Adam. Sinned against God. And brought death. Upon himself.

[30 : 17] And his posterity. The grave. Was created. In the garden of Eden. And in this garden.

Near to the cross. The grave. Was defeated. And consecrated. For the people of God. And in the third garden.

Of heaven. There are no graves. Revelation tells us. Chapter 21. Verse 2. And death shall be.

No more. The new heavens. And the new earth. Which God is going to establish. As the final order. Of all things for eternity. There are no cemeteries.

No places for burial. No graves by which. To weep. It's all to do with. Gloria's life.

[31 : 15] Where's it come from? From this tomb. From this burial. From this Jesus. From this cross. From his resurrection.

That's why we love him. That's why we love to remember him. To do this. In remembrance. Of this Jesus. Let's pray.

Lord our God. We. Again pray. That you would bless to us. Your word. For your word. Is so precious to us. As containing. So much that we ourselves.

Indeed all that we would never have discovered. Lord. We thank you especially. For. The care. With which you have. Expressed. In your word. These great foundational issues.

Of the life of your people. And in what it consists. And we thank you. As we prepare. By your will. To remember you. In the day to come. To remember your death.

[32 : 16] We pray. That as we. Contemplate. The fact of your burial. And of the death. That preceded it. That we may Lord. Come. All the more meaningfully. To remember you.

And to show. Our allegiance to you. In a way that openly associates. With all your people. And says by it. That this Lord. Is indeed our Lord.

And that we. Are his people. Go before us now we pray. And hear our prayer. For Jesus sake. Amen.