



“Honoring the Body of God’s Son”

Luke 23:50-56

Theme: The burial of Jesus stands as an authenticating event between His death and resurrection.

Introduction: The way the body of a deceased loved one is handled is often an indication of their devotion, love, and hope. At times, the funeral industry is happy to have a grieving loved one come in for arrangements as they are most eager to do anything to honor their deceased loved one. Such a sentiment is ripe for the salesman. Although capitalizing on grief borders on chicanery, it is a biblical precedent to honor the body of the deceased. It pictures not only the affection for the one who has passed, but it portrays the hope we have of resurrection as the body is placed as though asleep. Those who have died in Christ are even described as those **“who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”** As with much of Scripture, this has been corrupted by some cults into a teaching of soul sleep. Such a notion is contradicted numerous times in Scripture which states that a soul departs from the body to be with the Lord. The burial of Jesus is far more than sentimentalism by those distraught at His death. It is an essential aspect of the Gospel message for a variety of reasons – cp. ***1 Corinthians 15:3-4***. Our old man is described in Scripture as having been buried with Christ – cp. ***Romans 6:4***. In fact, **“the burial of Jesus stands as an authenticating even between His death and resurrection.”** It is an essential step that proves that He indeed died and actually rose from the dead....

I. The Honor by His Faithful Father – 23:50ff

A. THE DETAILS OF GOD’S PLANS

1. As other Gospels indicate, after Jesus’ death, He hung on the cross for a while as those dying with Him continued their demise.
2. We must remind ourselves, amid the tragedy unfolding before us throughout Luke’s account, that Jesus’ death was the eternal plan of God – cp. ***Acts 2:22-23***.

The Gospel of Luke

3. The details of the Messiah's suffering and death were provided throughout the Old Testament prophecies with such accuracy that Liberal theologians argue against those prophecies being in the original texts – often claiming they were later additions or denying the dates when they are written.
4. These details extend to even the handling of Jesus' body after His death in burial ... and even to the great event of His resurrection.
5. God had promised that the perfection of the Passover Lamb - the very Lamb of God - Jesus and His body would not be compromised – that not one of His bones will be broken – cp. **Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20**.
6. Also, God predetermined that Jesus would be pierced in His side – **Zechariah 12:10**.
7. Additionally, God planned to honor the body of His Son by prophesying that it would be buried with honor – **Isaiah 53:9**.
8. Ultimately, God's plan obviously also included the resurrection of His Son – cp. **Psalm 16:10**.

B. THE DETERMINATION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

1. Returning to our text in Luke 23, because it was getting on toward Sunset and the beginning of the Passover celebration, the "Jews" (referring again to the religious leadership) wanted to get the bodies off the crosses – cp. **John 19:31**.
2. The way this was typically insured was through a process known as *crurifragium* - the smashing of the legs of the victim with an iron mallet so that their suffocation would take a matter of minutes.
3. Prior to this happening to Jesus, God insured that His promise was fulfilled by signaling his satisfaction toward our sin by tearing the veil in the temple in two, restoring fellowship with His Son, and granting permission for Him to

The Gospel of Luke

die.

4. Thus, when the soldiers came to break His legs, they found Jesus already dead – cp. ***John 19:32-33***.
5. In order to certify that Jesus was dead, one of the soldiers pierced His side – cp. ***John 19:34-37***.
6. The scenario was awful – unless someone claimed the body and had the means by which to properly “dispose” of it, the crucified would be buried in a pit along with the thieves who died with Him.
7. God insured the honor of His Son by raising up a follower who was wealthy, had the means to properly bury Jesus, and who had the courage to step up and “go on record” as a disciple by asking for Jesus’ body and taking responsibility for it.

II. The Honor by His Fearful Followers – 23:50-54

A. THE CHARACTER OF THE “COUNCILORS” – vv. 50-51

1. God had His plan and it included two unlikely tools – *“And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; ...”*
 - a. *“Joseph ... was a member of the Council ...”* – a reference to the Sanhedrin, the court that had condemned Jesus and was so hostile throughout the ministry of Christ.
 - b. He is described as a *“good and righteous man”* – proven by the fact that he had not *“consented”* [συγκατατίθημι] – “to put down the same vote” – meaning either he had voted “no,” or out of fear had abstained.
 - c. His character had been impacted by God’s grace and was a man who had a life of genuine sanctification – not merely external sanctimony as were the other Councilors in the Sanhedrin.
 - d. He was genuinely *“waiting for the kingdom of God”* and was therefore a follower of Jesus Christ – ***Matthew 27:57***.

The Gospel of Luke

e. He was distinguished from other “Josephs” by saying he was *“a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews”* – or Rama - indicating that it had formerly been part of Samaria but had been turned over to the Judah.

2. Although a follower, *“Joseph”* had kept his faith a secret since the ruling by the Sanhedrin had been anyone who follows Jesus would be put out – cp. *[John 12:42-43; 19:38](#)*,
3. Joseph was not alone in his faith – another Councilor also believed in Jesus – cp. *[John 19:39](#)*.

B. THE COURAGE OF THE “COUNCILORS” – v. 52

1. Luke tells us that *“this man [Joseph] went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.”*
2. This was a major step – as Matthew states that Joseph had to gather up the courage to do this – *[Mark 15:43](#)*.
3. Having seen the glory in the work of Jesus, injustice and wickedness displayed by the Sanhedrin, the control displayed by Jesus as He died, the miraculous darkness, confession by the soldiers, and all else that he’d observed, he was finally ready to profess his faith in Jesus whatever the cost.
4. If he had not been willing to honor Jesus publicly while he was alive, he would now seek the honor the body of Jesus in his death by avoiding the inevitable outcome of Jesus’ body being buried in a collective grave.

C. THE CONSIDERATION BY THE “COUNCILORS” – vv. 53-54

1. Joseph and Nicodemus had agreed to step out in faith to honor Jesus and split up hastily to run the errands necessary to bury Jesus before Sunset.
2. Perhaps the body of Jesus was in the custody of the Centurion and the others with him who had professed Jesus to be God’s Son.

The Gospel of Luke

3. Certainly, the women remained with Jesus' body.
4. But Joseph went to secure the linen he would need to wrap the body according to the custom of the Jews – *“And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth ...”*
5. Meanwhile, Nicodemus had gone to get the spices they would use since they couldn't properly prepare the body for burial until Sunday morning – cp. [John 19:39](#).
6. Once they retrieved what was needed, they returned to Calvary to take charge of the body – cp. [John 19:40](#).
7. *“... took it down”* [καθαιρέω] – “to lower down” - it is likely that they removed the cross from the sleeve in the ground into which the Roman soldiers had dropped it and now the process was reversed, having to somehow remove the spikes that held Jesus to it.
8. They were having to hurry since *“it was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.”*
9. Hence, they hastened to take the body of Jesus to Joseph's newly hewn tomb just nearby Golgotha – cp. [John 9:41-42](#).
10. As was the common practice, a body was placed in a tomb that would be reused after 1 year – the decomposed body would be taken and put into an ossuary – a box that would be much smaller than a casket and that box would then be placed in a crypt or grave so that the tomb could be used again.
11. They would use a stone that would be rolled in front of the opening to the tomb – cp. [Matthew 27:59-60](#).

III. The Honor by His Fervent Followers – 23:55-56

A. THE ATTENTIVENESS OF THE WOMEN – v. 55

1. As Joseph and Nicodemus – two of the most dignified and honorable men in all of Israel – worked to quickly prepare

The Gospel of Luke

the body to be placed in the tomb, *“the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.”*

2. They wanted to be able to properly anoint the body, but they didn't have the time to do it properly.
3. Interestingly, again the Father had taken care of this as well through Mary of Bethany – cp. ***John 12:3; Mark 14:8-9.***
4. Another significance of this stating that they were noting where the body of Jesus had been lain is that it clarifies that the accusation that they had gotten confused and went to the wrong tomb is debunked.

B. THE ANTICIPATION BY THE WOMEN – v. 56

1. Since they had not had the time to properly anoint the body, we are told that they made their plans to come back on the very first opportunity after the closure of Passover – *“Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment.”*
2. This suggests that they were restrained only by the obligations of the Law to not do the work of anointing Him – their hearts were broken, and they saw their care for His body as their last act of devotion!
3. What an unspeakable joy would be theirs when they returned on Sunday to discover their preparations were unnecessary and their anticipation of being able to anoint Him obliterated by a far greater honor!

So What?

1. **The burial of Jesus validates the reality that Jesus actually died for you to pay for your sins.**
2. **The grief at the death of Christ must register within each of us as it was for our sins He died!**
3. **When the death of Jesus for our sins registers in the heart of a**

The Gospel of Luke

fearful follower, fear of the consequences of faith dissolves into bold devotion.

The burial of Jesus stands as an authenticating event between His death and resurrection.