

Jesus, the Death Conqueror

Scripture: John 19:31–20:10

Code: 43-110

The following sermon transcript does not match the *video* version of the sermon—it matches only the audio version. Here's a brief explanation why.

John MacArthur routinely preaches a sermon more than once on the same date, during different worship services at Grace Community Church. Normally, for a given sermon title, our website features the audio and video that were recorded during the same worship service. Very occasionally, though, we will post the audio from one service and the video from another. Such was the case for the sermon titled "I and the Father Are One, Part 2," the transcript of which follows below. The transcript is of the audio version.

For this morning we're going to look at the circumstances around the death and burial of our Lord, and then the next week as we come into chapter 20 we'll look at the resurrection. But let's look at verse 31, chapter 19. In verse 31 we read, "Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken.' And again another scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.'"

"After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 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. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."

We see in this portion of Scripture in the things that happened after our Lord died, and even in His burial, how His power is being exhibited. Jesus had power over His death. In verse 30, the prior verse to what I read, it says, "He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." He literally willed His own death. He left His own body at exactly the appropriate time and entered into the fellowship of those in heaven. He willed His own death, and then He controlled what happened after that to His body still hanging there, and even to His burial. "And this is all true," says John in verse 35. John identifies himself as "he who has seen and has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he's

telling the truth, so that you may also believe.”

Again, the purpose of John in all this gospel, every account, is that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have eternal life in His name. John, an eyewitness of the cross and its aftermath records this for us as true testimony. What it tells us, along with the resurrection, is that Jesus is the death conqueror. He has brought about His own death, controlled the events after His death, controlled His own burial, and then exerted the power to rise from the dead. He is the divine death conqueror. This is important for us to know, because the promise to every believer is that we will rise from the dead so that our new bodies, newly created, will be joined to our glorified souls in a form that suits us for perfect usefulness and joy in heaven.

I would think that the world in which we live would rush to understand the reality that Jesus is a death conqueror. Since, as I read in Hebrews 2, the whole world lives in the fear of death. All their life long it is a kind of slavery. People try to deal with that slavery in strange ways. I've read about people who actually commit suicide rather than face the unexpected death. They want to take death into their own hands and control it, rather than continue to live in fear, so they take their own lives.

And then there are those people who want to deny that there's any afterlife at all. That removes the sting of death. If you just go out of existence, what is there to fear? Along that line, a new phenomenon has started appearing in our country, and it's now spreading around the world. It's a series of public events, small ones, designed to provide tea and cake – that's the way they advertise it – tea and cake. And they even recommend a certain kind of cake. In one city the cake is featured as a fine lemon cake with a lavender buttercream frosting, provided by the Welcome Home Bakery.

So what is that about? Well, the new tea and cake meetings are called death cafes, death cafes. You could google death café and maybe find one near you. There are about a thousand of them now in thirty countries, and the idea is that people need to be able to face death comfortably so that they can make the most out of their finite lives before they go out of existence. These death cafes globally are sponsored by an organization called Impermanence. “Impermanence is a not-for-profit company undertaking innovative work around death.” It's kind of a trip advisor for cemeteries. I'm sure it would be a nice way to try to cope with the fear of death to just believe you're going out of existence, and be happy to have some tea and cake and talk about nonexistence.

But you not impermanent, you are forever. You will live forever. You will not only live forever in a spiritual form, but you will live forever in a body that will be raised from the grave to suit you for your eternal dwelling place. You will have a body suited for maximum enjoyment of heaven or maximum suffering in hell. You are not impermanent; you will live forever in a resurrected form. When you understand death that way it does cast its long, foreboding shadow over every life, that is why Job 18:14, way back in the patriarchal period calls death the king of terrors. It's not only because of what comes after death, but it's because of the fact that death may be violent, agonizing, and painful.

Psalms 55:4 speaks of the terrors of death that have fallen upon us. First Corinthians 15:26 says death is the enemy to be feared. Hebrews 2:15, as I mentioned, talks about the fear of death being the lifelong experience of humanity. Ecclesiastes 8:8 says, “No man has authority over the day of his death,” and therein lies some of the fear.

It's not just what comes after death, it's the fact that you're not in control of it. What comes after

death is even more fearful, in honesty. Hebrews 9:27, "It's appointed to man once to die, and after that the judgment, the judgment of God." And that judgment includes a resurrection to eternal punishment for unbelievers, or eternal glory for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today folks are thinking about 9/11 because this is an anniversary of that horrific event, and I remember when that happened and a few days later, I wound up on CNN with Larry King, and the first thing he said to me without any warning was, "What is the significance of what has just happened?" to which I replied, "The significance is this: everyone is going to die, and they are not in control of when and how." No one died in 9/11 that wasn't going to die; everyone dies; and rarely do we ever have control over that death. That's the message.

The good news however is this, that Jesus has power over death, power to raise the dead to eternal glory. He is the death conqueror. Death is a surprise for us, but it was not a surprise for Jesus. The good news is He controlled death, He overpowered death, He conquered death not only for Himself, but for all who put their trust in Him.

He is the one who has the power of resurrection. Back in the 5th chapter of John, Jesus said that He is the one who will raise the dead – some to the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of judgment. But He has the power to give life to the dead. We've seen that in His ministry as He raised dead people. We see it most dramatically in His own resurrection, which we'll look at next week. And it was going to be on His timetable.

Throughout the gospel of John, and even earlier in the other gospels, we know that death stalked Jesus. In Matthew, chapter 2, we understand that Herod, in an effort to kill Him when He was but a baby, killed all the male children under two years of age around the vicinity of Bethlehem. A massacre, a slaughter of male children, hoping to kill Jesus in the group. We also know that when He began His ministry and went back to Nazareth and preached one sermon in His own hometown, they tried to throw Him off a cliff and stone Him to death. And as we follow the flow of the gospel of John, it's very apparent that early in His ministry they wanted Jesus dead. That is high on their priority.

But He controlled every aspect of His living and every aspect of His dying. He said in John 6:51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." He's talking about His death as the means by which He would grant eternal life.

In chapter 11 of the gospel of John, He says in familiar words to Martha at the resurrection of Lazarus, verse 25, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies." And in the 14th chapter in that upper room the night before His crucifixion, verse 19, "A little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also." He promises that through His death and resurrection He will provide resurrection life for those who believe in Him. The apostle Paul expressed it this way in 2 Timothy, "Our Savior Jesus Christ who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, conquering death.

At the end of 1 Corinthians 15, familiar words, starting in verse 53, "This perishable must put on the imperishable; this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is

written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christ is the death conqueror who conquers death not only for Himself, but for us; and so we can say, as all believers do, with Paul in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain, to die is gain." It is gain, because Christ has conquered death; and even when we die, it only ushers us into eternal life.

Now we see the power of Christ as the death conqueror in the text that I just read to you. We've already seen a glimpse of it in verse 30 when He literally brought about His own death. He willed His own death; He left His own body by His own power, because His work was finished. It was done.

The demonstration even in His dying was so powerful that it was obvious to the thief that He was who He claimed to be, because the thief said, "Remember me when You come into Your kingdom." That Jewish thief who had first was mocking Jesus and abusing Him with words saw in His dying evidence that He was the Messiah, God's anointed King who would rise from the dead and establish a kingdom, and would raise His own people to dwell in that kingdom, and that thief asked to be one of them, and Jesus said, "Today you'll be with Me in paradise."

Some of the soldiers recognized who He was, and the centurion verbalized it: "Truly, this man was the Son of God." They saw it in His dying. And I told you last time that John wants us to see the glory in His dying, as He controlled every aspect of His dying. So let's talk about that a little bit more in the context of verses 30-37, or verses 31-37, His dying. He demonstrates power over death in His dying, and then I want you to see He demonstrates power over death in His burial, in His burial.

There are about 30 specific prophecies in the Old Testament relating to His sufferings that are fulfilled around His death written hundreds of years before, obviously, perfectly fulfilled during the 24 hours around His crucifixion. As well as many typical or types, and many analogies – and we saw some of those in our last couple of studies. But now we see Him dead, as 1 Peter 3:18 says, "The flesh is dead, but He's alive in His spirit," obviously because He is the Eternal One. But while His body is dead, He is alive, controlling everything that happens to His body, and doing it not in a miraculous way, but in a providential way that is controlling the non-miraculous behavior of the people around the event.

Now, as I said, death had stalked Jesus, relentlessly stalked Him back even in the early part of His ministry. Way back in chapter 5, the Jews were persecuting Jesus, verse 16. Verse 18: "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." They wanted to kill Him very early in His public ministry.

In the 7th chapter of John, verse 1, "After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee. He was unwilling to walk in Judea" – in the southern part of Israel – "because the Jews were seeking to kill Him." Chapter 8, verse 37, "I know that you are Abraham's descendants;" – He says to the Jews – "yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you."

In verse 40, "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth." Down in verse

59, the end of the 8th chapter, "They picked up stones to throw at Him," - that would have been a public execution by stoning – "but He hid Himself and went out of the temple."

In chapter 10, verse 30, He says, "I and the Father are one." And the Jews again picked up stones to stone Him. In chapter 11 and verse 53, "From that day on they planned together to kill Him." It went from being a kind of instant reaction to kill Him to becoming a set plan to kill Him. Death stalked Him.

Death has fear, not only because of what comes after, but because of the surprise element. It comes before we're ready. It comes before things are in place. It comes before we finish the tasks we want to do. Death is a shocker and a stalker. It comes before the will is written. It comes before we had the opportunity to forgive a wounded friend. It comes before we said, "I love you," to a dear one. It comes before the realization of all our hopes and all our dreams. That's how death is.

But not with Jesus. John 10 He says, "No one takes My life from Me; I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." And that's exactly what He did. He controlled the laying down of His life, chapter 19, verse 30; He controlled what happened after He died; He controlled His burial; and then He controlled His resurrection.

When He said, "It is finish!" or in the Greek *Tetelestai*, one word, "It is finish! It has been accomplished!" and He shouted it at the top of His voice for all to hear through all the ages, the work of redemption was finished. Salvation was accomplished. Satan was defeated. Jesus had full knowledge of that and of every detail that needed to be fulfilled, and once He had declared His thirst and been given a drink of sour wine He knew that was the last prophecy to be fulfilled. Verse 28 of this same chapter says, "Knowing that all things were accomplished, He then said, 'I thirst,' so that that final prophecy would be fulfilled, then He gave up His life by His own power."

The trial had been in the middle of the night, illegal. He was sentenced about 6:00 a.m. He was crucified at 9:00 a.m. according to Mark 15:25. From noon to 3:00 there was darkness everywhere. This is the darkness of the outpouring of divine wrath. It's in those three hours that He absorbs the infinite punishment for all the sins of all the people who will ever be redeemed. He could absorb it as an infinite person in three hours. It was in those three hours that God had forsaken Him and punished Him for the sins of His people. At 3:00 the darkness dissipates and He dies about 3:00 – very soon for someone who is crucified.

Crucified at 9:00 and dead six hours later. Some lingered for two or three days. And Jesus was stronger than any human who has ever lived, because sin had not touched His body. He didn't die because He was weak, He died because it was time to die. And He came to bear our sins in His own body on the cross; He came to suffer in our place; and when the suffering ended and the darkness disappeared at 3:00 it was time for Him to die. You have to understand that the judgment that Jesus received was not God killing Him, it was God pouring wrath on Him for three hours, conscious wrath. He felt all of that. God did not kill Him as a judgment, God poured wrath on Him, and when the wrath was spent He gave up His own life. So at 3:00 He was ready to die.

Now that's very important, because this is Friday, this is Friday; 3:00 is in the afternoon, and now we begin to see why Jesus and why God planned for a 3:00 death. Look at verse 31. "Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that

they might be taken away.”

The day of preparation simply means the day before a Sabbath, the day when Jewish people prepared for the Sabbath. They had to do a lot of preparation, because the Sabbath was so restricted they had to do all the preparations for anything going on on the Sabbath the day before. And this was not just any Sabbath, this was a high day. Why? Because on this Sabbath was the Passover – which was an annual event, only once a year – and a high, sacred day, a sacredness above other Sabbaths for sure.

So this is Friday afternoon, the time is around 3:00. The next day is a high day, it's Passover day, it's a Sabbath. They don't want these bodies, they don't want particularly the body of Jesus on the cross, because they believe that would defile that Passover Sabbath. Where did they get that idea? Back in Deuteronomy 21 – and they would be familiar with this – and verses 22 and 23. A prescription is given: “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.”

Now a lot of people had been hanged on a tree, a lot of people had been crucified on wooden crosses around Jerusalem; but we don't know that any of them had been hanged on a tree, because the Jews wanted Him hanged on a tree. They didn't seem to make an issue if the Romans did it. But this is different. Jesus has been hanged on a tree by their will, from their perspective, and so this then threatens to violate the prescription of Deuteronomy 21. So they want to get Him down, and with Him take down the other two thieves. “We don't want our land defiled.”

Really amazing, isn't it? This priority reeks with hypocrisy. It's a nauseating perspective that these Jewish people have. They have just killed the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God at the hands of the Romans. And while they're killing the Son of God they're scrupulously trying to maintain their undefiled condition. They don't give chapter and verse, but surely they have Deuteronomy 21 in mind. They wanted to be sure to keep God's law while killing the one who both wrote it and fulfilled it.

And it is getting late in the afternoon, and Sabbath begins at sunset, so they are in a hurry. And, oh, by the way, so is God, because Jesus must be in the ground on Friday, because He said He would be three days in the grave. Friday is Day One, it has to be part of Friday. All day Saturday is Day Two. Sunday morning gets us into Day Three. So these Jews, without any knowledge at all of the purposes of God, seek Roman permission to speed up His death and get Him off the cross before Sabbath began that evening.

Now how would they speed up their death? They used what has been in the Latin called *crucifragium*, *crucifragium*. They would take a mallet – a massive mallet that was basically swung in two hands like a sledgehammer – and smash the femurs of their legs. The word “break” that is used there, “their legs being broken,” literally means to shatter or to shiver to pieces. So the soldiers came prepared to do that, verse 32, “and they smashed the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with him,” which means Jesus is already dead; they're still alive. They weren't as strong as Jesus.

Most men, as I say, might live two or three days. They're still alive; Jesus is dead. He's dead

because He willed His own death once His atoning suffering had ended. When the femurs were smashed, the victim on the cross could no longer push himself up or move himself up in order to catch a breath, and soon would die not only from the trauma and the pain and bleeding, but from suffocation, asphyxiation. This was a fast death, as the body slumped and the lungs could no longer draw in air.

“They came to Jesus,” – in verse 33 – “and when they saw that He was already dead they didn’t break His legs.” Some people have said, “Well, Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead because He wasn’t dead. They thought He was dead. They put Him in a grave and the coolness of the grave resuscitated Him, so He didn’t really die and He didn’t really rise.

I remind you of the testimony here of these men. This is the testimony of executioners. They live with death; this is what they do. They kill people; that’s their profession. There are at least four of them. This is a collective understanding that He is dead.

It’s so soon however that “one of them” – verse 34 – “pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” Just opened His abdominal cavity and out poured blood and water. This would be evidence that He was dead. No need to break His legs He’s already dead.

As you will remember, Pilate sought to find out if He was actually dead, according to Mark 15:44, and it was confirmed to Pilate that He was dead. He had to die before the soldiers came to break His legs, He knew that. He had to command His own death before that happened. Why? Go down to verse 36: “For these things came to pass to fulfill the scripture, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” And He had to be pierced because of Zechariah 12:10, and verse 37, another scripture, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

It was stated in the Old Testament, by the way, in Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 that when you brought a lamb for Passover that lamb had to be without blemish and without spot. It had to be a perfect lamb, and it explicitly says “a lamb without a broken bone.”

Not a bone of the Passover lamb shall be broken. He is the perfect fulfillment of the Passover lamb, and that is why Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7 refers to Him as “Christ our Passover.” But in verse 36 you have a direct quote of Psalm 34:20, “He keeps all his bones, and not one of them is broken.”

Jesus Christ died before His legs were to be broken in order to validate His identity as the Son of God, and to fulfill prophecy. If Satan had his way, His bones would have been smashed. If Satan had his way, maybe there would have been a debate about whether He was actually dead so soon, and they would have smashed His legs anyway. But if they had done that the prophecy would not be fulfilled, and they would not have pierced Him either. Jesus controls His own death and what’s going on after His death to fulfill prophecy.

The soldier that rammed a spear into His side did so because they could determine by what happened what His condition was. It’s interesting to contemplate just exactly what that means, Zechariah 12:10, when it says, “They will look on Me who they have pierced.”

“Look on Me” – God speaking – “whom they have pierced” is a reference to a future time when “the Jews will look back on Me” – God – “whom they pierced and mourn for Him as an only son.”

Isaiah 53:5 talks about Him being pierced for our transgressions. And then John says – and John’s giving you an eyewitness account – blood and water came out, blood and water came out, another proof that He is really dead.

I can’t be dogmatic about this. There have been a number of discussions through the years about the physiology of this. How did His body actually die? How did it actually die? We know that He left, that “He was dead in the flesh but alive in the spirit,” – 1 Peter 3:18.

How did His body actually stop operating? The best exclamation that I’ve read is that His heart ruptured. Now you say a heart rupturing is rare; this is true. But it’s not just rare, it’s only happened one time that a human heart has been asked, even a sinless human heart, to bear divine punishment for all the sins of all the people who have ever been redeemed in human history. Anxiety affects your heart. Fear affects your heart. Dread affects your heart. Your heart races. Your blood pressure goes up at far less than this.

It is a commentary by Dr. Stuart Bergsma who said, “I lean toward this view, though it is extremely rare for a normal heart muscle to rupture. Christ suffered as no man has ever before or since suffered.” In a sense the heart just exploded would be his explanation. And that does fit the possibility of Psalm 69:20. Psalm 69:20 says, “Reproach has broken my heart. Reproach has broken my heart.”

You say, “That’s pretty obscure; you’re grabbing Psalm 69:20 out of the air.” Not really, because Psalm 69:21 says, “They gave me gall for my food and in my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.” That’s definitely fulfilled at the cross. If that’s a prophecy of the cross, why not the one before? I don’t say that I’m dogmatic about that, but what physical heart could possibly survive such agony? And the blood and limpid serum just gushed out from a broken heart.

Why is this so important? Because this is exactly what Scripture says, so John wants you to get it. Look at verse 35: “And he who has seen” – that’s John. Again, he never uses his name, but he refers to himself again. “And he who has seen has testified.”

There was only one disciple at the cross, right, only one. There were four women, there was one man and it was John, and he says, “He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true. I’m telling you the truth,” – he knows that he’s telling the truth – “so that you also may believe.”

“I want you to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. I want you to believe it because not only of the life He lived and the message He preached, but even the death He died, and even the prophecies that were fulfilled when He was dead.”

This is further testimony that He was dead, and that sounds like John, because in 1 John, as he begins to write his epistle, he says, “What was from the beginning,” – referring to Christ – “what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, looked at, touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – the life was manifested. We have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and manifested to us.”

“I’m telling you about Christ and I was there. I saw; I heard; I touched.” He died. He was dead. That is the testimony of the executioners, that is the testimony of the spear, and that fulfills Scripture.

Verse 36: “For these things” – John writes – “come to pass to fulfill the scripture, ‘Not a bone of Him shall be broken,’” – Psalm 34:20. And again another scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced,” – Zechariah 12:10. John is eager to tell us this is eyewitness testimony that He is dead; and not only is He dead, but He has controlled His death to fulfill prophecy. Jesus is the death conqueror even in His dying.

And then just briefly, and secondly, John shows His power over death in His burial, starting in verse 38. Now what would happen normally to a crucified individual? The Romans would simply let them be eaten by birds or thrown like roadkill on the side of a road somewhere, as continuing the example of not violating Rome. They might even end up in the dump. They might even end up dead bodies thrown in Gehenna where the fire never ceased and the garbage of Jerusalem was burned. But the Romans did not bury criminals. The Jews did bury them; that was typically a Jewish thing to do. But I don’t know that they had any particular plans to bury Jesus whom they viewed as a blasphemer.

In an amazing, amazing fulfillment of prophecy, we see a name: Joseph of Arimathea. Now there is a prophecy back in Isaiah 53, Isaiah 53:9. Speaking of Jesus, Isaiah writes, “His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, but He was with a rich man in His death.” His grave was assigned to be with wicked men. Sure, He was going to be thrown wherever criminals were thrown. But He was with a rich man in His death.

How is that going to happen? Who is the rich man? There are no rich apostles. And there’s only one there, and that’s John, and he’s not rich, and the others are hiding out of fear. Who all of a sudden is going to emerge and claim to be a follower of Jesus who is rich, who has a tomb, who has a tomb nearby so that the burial could happen immediately so that He’s in the ground on Friday?

It was only one person, and we meet him in verse 38. “After these things Joseph of Arimathea,” – that’s the town – “being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews.” So here is a man who is a secret disciple. He was afraid to entertain any public confession of faith about Christ even though he believed. If you go back into chapter 12 you remember it says, “There were many of the rulers who believed in Him, but they didn’t acknowledge it for fear of the Jews. They were more concerned about what men thought than what God thought.” So here is this secret believer.

Now we know a lot about him because he’s mentioned in the other gospels. He is rich. Matthew 27:57, he is very rich. He is a good man. He is a member of the Jewish supreme court, the Sanhedrin that sentenced Jesus to death – no doubt he didn’t vote that. He has been a coward, afraid to acknowledge himself when Jesus was ministering and alive. Somehow, in some dramatic way, by divine work on his heart, the coward becomes almost heroic in bravery; and as soon as Jesus has died – which means he must have been around – he sets aside all that fear and all that dread and all that cowardice, and he goes to Pilate and has to reveal that he is a disciple of Jesus, and he asks that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission after checking to make sure He was dead; and he came and took away His body. So now instead of Jesus, Isaiah 53:9 says, having a grave with the wicked, He’s going to be with a rich man in His death.

It says in Mark 15:43 that Joseph gathered up courage. No doubt power of the Lord came on him. He fulfills prophecy, because Jesus had said in Matthew 12:40 that He would be in the grave three days and rise. He has to be in the grave on Friday. Joseph appears to do that.

Jesus, dead, had moved Joseph in ways that Joseph wouldn't be moved when Jesus was alive. Jesus, dead physically, brought Joseph to an open confession and moved him into the plan in a critical way; and he was the right guy, because he was a believer; and he was the right guy, because he had a tomb that had never been used, it wasn't occupied; and he was the right guy, because the tomb that he had was right next to where Jesus was crucified, which meant they could get Him in there Friday.

And there was another man. After Joseph came and took away His body, Nicodemus – remember him from John 3, the teacher in Israel? He had come to be a secret disciple also. “He came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.” The Jews didn't embalm, they wrapped in linen; and in the wrappings they poured fragrant rosin, called myrrh, and fragrant sandalwood, called aloes – strong spices, literally to overpower the stench of death. And by the way, a hundred-pound weight would be what would be used for a king, a king. So the two secret disciples meet, fulfilling prophecy, showing the power of Jesus to control the details even of His burial.

Would you please remember that these are not disciples plotting a resurrection or they wouldn't have used a hundred-pound weight on Him. They weren't planning to steal His body. Certainly the other disciples weren't; they aren't even there. Some women helped we know. Verse 40 says, “They took the body of Jesus, bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in that place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb which no one had yet been laid.”

Matthew 27:60 says that tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, Friday, since the tomb was nearby they laid Jesus there. So He was in the grave on Friday, that's Day One. He was in the grave on Saturday, that's Day Two. He was in the grave on Sunday until the morning, that's three days.

Any part of a day to a Jew constituted that day. Prophecy was fulfilled. He had power over His dying. He had power over the treatment of His body after He was dead. He had power over His burial to fulfill prophecy. Truly this is the Son of God.

Our Father, we thank You for the testimony of Holy Scripture. Thank You for the glory of Scripture. We see the glory of Christ shining through the glory of Scripture. We see Your glory in Him and Your glory in the written Word. Truly He is the Son of God. Truly He is the Creator. Truly He is the life. He controls living and dying. He is the death conqueror who has conquered death Himself and conquered death for all who put their trust in Him.

Lord, would You bring to the heart of everyone here the reality that the fear of death can end, that there is no reason to fear death, even its surprise, because even if we die, we live because He lives, and we live with Him; and we have no fear of judgment, for there is no judgment to those who are in Christ, because He bore all our judgment. Draw us to Christ the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

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