

## Buried With Christ 7-1-06

Matthew 27:51-66 (NIV)

<sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" <sup>55</sup> Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. <sup>56</sup> Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

<sup>57</sup> As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. <sup>59</sup> Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup> and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

<sup>62</sup> The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. <sup>63</sup> "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' <sup>64</sup> So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." <sup>65</sup> "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." <sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

In the beginning of time, God warned the first couple that if they disobeyed they would die. He said through the prophets that the soul that sins must die. (Ezekiel 18:4) The wages of sin, that is, the just payment sin deserves, is death. (Romans 6:23) If you choose to rebel against your Maker and live a life of selfishness, if you refuse to hear His voice and harden your heart against His will, you deserve death. But God loved us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die that death we deserve in our place. (John 3:16) In our passage last week, Jesus had declared the work of redeeming our souls to be finished, paid in full. He surrendered His spirit into the hands of His Father. The sinless One took on our sin and the curse it deserved. It is an act of graciousness that takes a lifetime for us to grasp, and so we celebrate it in communion again and again as we try to take in the enormity of it all. Jesus not only took our sins, but He gave us His righteousness in exchange. (2 Corinthians 5:21) The perfect life He lived in righteousness was credited to our account.

At the moment He died, Matthew tells us about some of the confirming signs that immediately followed. <sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. From the time that Moses erected the Tabernacle in the wilderness, through the days of the Temple Solomon first built, once every year a priest would go into the Holy of Holies. (Hebrews 9:7) No one else dared go into that room at any other time. Behind a three inch thick curtain was the Ark of the Covenant.

**Commented [notes1]:** 4 For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. Ezek 18:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Cor 5:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. Heb 9:7 (NIV)

It was a wooden rectangular box covered in gold with poles to carry it and lid that was called the Mercy Seat or Atonement Cover. At each end of the Mercy Seat was a large angelic figure whose wings touched the other's over the Mercy Seat. Above the lid and under the wings was the shining orb referred to as the Shekinah Glory. (Leviticus 16:2)

This ball of light represented the manifest presence of God. It was a fearful thing to stand before the Holy God who sees every motivation and inclination of one's heart. (Hebrews 10:31) He is a God who does not leave sin unpunished. (Numbers 14:18) He is a God who is angry with the wicked every day. (Psalm 7:11) The priest would prepare by ceremonially washing himself. (Leviticus 16:4) His robe was trimmed near the feet with bells in the shape of pomegranates to sound out a call for mercy as he entered. (Exodus 28:34-35) The Altar of Incense was used to fill the Holy of Holies with the incense of prayer. Jewish stories tell us that the priest would tie a rope around his ankle. If the priest was struck dead, the rope could be used to pull his corpse out of the Holy of Holies from under the veil.

With fear and trembling the priest entered in with the blood of the sacrificial lamb. He was to sprinkle it before and upon the Mercy Seat, casting it before the shining ball of light. (Leviticus 16:15) He was symbolically declaring that death had taken place and the penalty of sin was paid. Though it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to atone or cover sin, it was declaring that the Lord who makes us holy would somehow cover our sin in a just and holy way. (Hebrews 10:4) Once the blood was sprinkled and the prayers uttered, the priest would back up to the curtain, thanking God for His mercy in not immediately striking him dead. As he exited, the priests in that outer room, called the Holy Place, uttered a sigh of relief and thanksgiving. God had accepted the offering. The nation felt that they were right with God, at least, for the moment.

But now, Jesus, our High Priest, would take the perfect blood, His own, and enter into the Holy of Holies in heaven. (Hebrews 10:11-14) You see, the temple on earth was patterned after the real one in heaven. (Hebrews 8:5) Jesus' blood was the blood that all the bulls, goats, and lambs were only a picture of. The priest was only a picture of our Great High Priest, Jesus. Everything that God commanded to be done on earth was only a picture of this day when Jesus met the requirements of a just God. When Jesus did it, it need never be done again. It was once and for all. Since the penalty for our sin has been paid in full, we can now do what no Israelite would have even dreamed of. We can walk confidently and without fear into the Holy of Holies. (Ephesians 3:12) That is what that torn veil represented. It was torn from top to bottom, a picture of God eagerly reaching down from heaven to rip the veil open and welcome us into His presence.

*The earth shook and the rocks split.* <sup>52</sup> *The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.* The rocks on the traditional site of Golgotha, as well as Gordon's Calvary, have a large cracks in them. Many believe that this crack happened during the earthquake that followed Jesus' death. (Jeremiah 10:10) Remember that tombs are not gravesites on manicured lawn as we think of them. They are limestone caves in which the body of the deceased was laid until the

**Commented [notes6]:** 2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.  
Lev 16:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.  
Lev 16:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** 18 'The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.'  
Num 14:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.  
Psalms 7:10-11 (KJV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 4 He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on.  
Lev 16:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 34 The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe.  
35 Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die.  
Ex 28:34-35 (NIV)

**Commented [notes12]:** 15 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did w... [1]

**Commented [notes13]:** because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.  
Heb 10:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ... [2]

**Commented [notes15]:** 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to bui... [3]

**Commented [notes16]:** 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.  
Eph 3:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 10 But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. ... [4]

flesh decayed from the bones. These limestone caves broke open and certain godly people were resurrected.

Why did God give so many signs to people? This was a turning point in all of history. It was not at all what they expected God to do. It was an event so far beyond their way of thinking that signs were a necessity. The signs were God's affirmation to the claims Jesus made. The people needed help, and God gave them the help they needed to believe.

<sup>53</sup> *They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.* Imagine being one of the people that witnessed the events of that day. Jesus, the healer, prophet, and teacher was judged and executed by Rome. If you were watching the events unfold, you would have witnessed one of the strangest crucifixions you'd ever seen. Instead of cursing the guards, He was forgiving them. Instead of answering insult with insult, He quoted Scripture. He took care of family, prayed aloud, declared His work done, and surrendered His spirit to the One He called Father. The darkness for three hours was unexplainable. The earth began to shake. Three days later, dead people appeared. What would you think?

<sup>54</sup> *When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"* The four soldiers that crucified Jesus became believers. Those men had witnessed many crucifixions, but nothing remotely like this one! They were terrified that they had been the instruments of crucifixion of the Son of God. They knew He was no ordinary man. Romans had stories of the gods visiting men to determine whether or not they deserved blessings or punishment. We can't say if these men became believers in Jesus as their Redeemer. It wouldn't be the first centurion to believe in Jesus. (Matthew 8:5) We do know that they were convinced that Jesus was a god or a son of a god because of what they witnessed.

<sup>55</sup> *Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.* <sup>56</sup> *Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.* Most of the men were in hiding, but the women stood by Jesus.

<sup>57</sup> *As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.* Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, and was referred to as a prominent one. (Mark 15:43) He was known to be good and upright. (Luke 23:50) He was seeking the Kingdom of God. Up to this point he had remained a secret disciple, keeping His allegiance to Christ hidden out of fear of being persecuted by his peers. He probably excused himself from the trial of Jesus. I wonder if he was feeling conviction for not speaking up.

Many of us have tried to hide our allegiance to Jesus because we want to fit in. We don't want stand out as one of those born-againers. If we just stay quiet, excuse ourselves from certain gatherings, maybe we will never have to declare that we belong to Him. Maybe we can have our worldly respect and be Jesus' disciple too.

**Commented [notes18]:** 5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. Matt 8:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Mark 15:43 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, Luke 23:50 (NIV)

But then He shows the full extent of His love, hanging naked on a torturous cross. Then, Joseph and Nicodemus and you and I have to make a decision. If He loves me to that extent, if He is willing to hang there in front of everyone for me, will I be too embarrassed to declare my allegiance to Him publicly? (Mark 8:38)

Joseph made a decision that would change the course of his life. <sup>58</sup> *Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him.* He decided he would take care of Jesus' body. In doing that, all would know that he had decided to cast his lot with this humiliated Messiah. By touching the dead body he would not be able to go into the temple during those feast days. (Numbers 19:11-12) This was his break with his peers. He would forever more be scorned by them. He had made it to the highest place of honor in his society, a wealthy and respected member of the National Council. Seeing the death of Jesus and the miraculous signs that accompanied it caused him to find the courage to make the change and head a whole new direction in life. Mark says he went boldly to Pilate. (Mark 15:43) That could be translated "summoned courage".

That is what many of us have to do. We have to take a real look at what Jesus did for us, what He endured to bring salvation to us. Then, we should summon the courage to be honest with those we meet about our gratitude and commitment to Christ. We should have the courage to head a whole new direction in life. It may mean a change of career. The missionary we had a few weeks ago told me of how many people at the churches they visit would come up and say how much they admired them for leaving the comforts of America to go to a foreign field. They would confide that they felt called to do something similar and would one day obey that call. Sadly, for many, they put off that day until the flame that was once ignited by the Holy Spirit is only a smoldering wick, a dim and fading memory.

For some of us identifying with Christ may mean changing the group of friends we associate with. It will definitely mean a change in our conversation. We have to summon the courage, like Joseph did, to make that stand, not in religious snobbery, but out of honest conviction and association with the One who died for us. An effective change comes from a heart moved by love, not religion. That is the leap that Joseph made that afternoon. There was no going back. Nor did he want to go back to those who had condemned, mocked and crucified the One that he knew was the Messiah.

<sup>59</sup> *Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,* <sup>60</sup> *and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock.* Is this the Shroud of Turin? I don't know if we can say for sure, but we do know that Joseph was willing to give whatever it took to give Jesus an honorable burial. Recently a first century grave shroud was discovered in a tomb in Jerusalem confirming that this was indeed the custom of that time.

By putting Jesus in his tomb, he was donating the tomb to Jesus' family. A tomb was only for those wealthy enough to afford the land and the labor to have it hewn out. Because the Jewish faith frowned on mixing unlike things, each tomb was for only one family. There is a tomb near the crucifixion site that some think may have been the

**Commented [notes21]:** 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."  
Mark 8:38 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 11 "Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days. 12 He must purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean."  
Num 19:11-12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.  
Mark 15:43 (NIV)

tomb of Jesus. It has a place for two bodies, but one of the niches was hewn at the foot to accommodate a taller person than it was originally designed for.

Joseph had the help of another member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, who also abandoned everything he knew to associate himself with Jesus. You probably remember him; he is the one that came to Jesus by night, the man that Jesus instructed to be born again. (John 3:1-3) He supplied the spices that were used to cover the smell of decomposition. That would enable them to visit the body in the weeks following the burial.

Joseph and Nicodemus laid Jesus' body on that prepared slab of limestone, put the shroud over Him, and placed the spices. They were in the tomb with Jesus. In a sense, they were buried with Him. The Apostle Paul picks up on this imagery and tells us that every Christian should be buried with Jesus. In fact, he writes that baptism is really a picture of being buried with Christ. <sup>3</sup> *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* <sup>4</sup> *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* Romans 6:3-4 (NIV) But it all begins by dying with Him on the cross. We die to our old self. Then we are buried with Him in baptism. It's a public declaration that we are done with our old life of selfishness. But thank the Lord it doesn't end there. We are also raised with Him to newness of life. (Romans 6:5)

It is interesting that a tomb that is thought to be the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea is very close to the traditional site of the tomb he gave to Jesus. Tradition says that Joseph became a missionary.

*He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.* <sup>61</sup> *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.* Tombs were closed with large wheel like stones that traveled in a track in front of the entrance. The stone kept out animals. The women sat opposite the tomb, morning the death of the One in whom they had placed their hope.

<sup>62</sup> *The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.* <sup>63</sup> *"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'* <sup>64</sup> *So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."* <sup>65</sup> *"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how."* <sup>66</sup> *So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.* The Pharisees knew exactly what Jesus meant when He said that if they destroyed this temple He would raise it in three days. They asked Pilate to set guards before the tomb to secure it and put a seal on the stone. It was the first time a dead man was guarded for fear of resurrection. They claimed the concern was that of the disciples stealing the body. They knew the disciples were in hiding, fearful of showing their faces. I think they were afraid Jesus' claim would come to pass. And it did! But that is for next week.

**Commented [notes24]:** 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.  
2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."  
3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. " John 3:1-3 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.  
Romans 6:5 (NIV)

**Page 2: [1] Commented [notes12] Paul Wallace**

15 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.  
Lev 16:15 (NIV)

**Page 2: [2] Commented [notes14] Paul Wallace**

11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.  
12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.  
13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,  
14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.  
Heb 10:11-14 (NIV)

**Page 2: [3] Commented [notes15] Paul Wallace**

5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."  
Heb 8:5 (NIV)

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10 But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.  
Jer 10:10 (NIV)