

The Burial of Jesus

John 19:31-42

In John 19:31-42, the apostle John records two incidents that happened following Jesus' death and before his resurrection. Both involve fear and both deal with the treatment that Jesus' body received. The Jewish leaders rushed the crucifixion process out of a legalistic fear about violating the Mosaic Law. A love for Jesus helped Joseph of Arimathea overcome his fear of what the Jewish leaders might think when he helped bury the body of Jesus. *Don't let fear keep you from speaking up about Jesus.*

Jesus' body is removed from the cross (31-37)

The day of preparation was Friday, the day before the Sabbath (31). It was a special Sabbath (high day) since it fell during Passover week.

The Jewish leaders were afraid of incurring God's wrath by violating the Mosaic Law and leaving the three victims on the cross overnight (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

The Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two terrorists whom they crucified in order to hasten death (32).

The soldiers did not break Jesus' legs since he was already dead (33).

One of the Roman soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear (34). Blood and water poured from the wound, confirming that Jesus was a real man and that he had died.

The apostle John confirmed these events by stating that he was an eyewitness (35). John's purpose was to convince people to believe that Jesus was God's Son.

The lack of broken bones (36) fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19).

Piercing Jesus' side (37) also fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 12:10).

Jesus is buried (38-42)

Joseph of Arimathea (38) was:

- rich (Matthew 27:57)
- an important member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50)
- a good and righteous person (Luke 23:50)
- he lived with the expectation of God's kingdom (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51)
- a disciple of Jesus (Matthew 27:57; John 19:38)
- a secret disciple who feared the Jews (John 19:38)

Normally the Romans placed the bodies of crucified offenders in a cemetery for criminals outside the city. Family members could not claim the bodies of people who were crucified for sedition (inciting rebellion against Rome).

Pilate probably granted Joseph's request for Jesus' body because he knew Jesus was not guilty and that this would further humiliate the Jews.

Nicodemus also helped with the burial of Jesus (39). He brought 75 pounds of spices with which to prepare Jesus' body for burial.

The burial custom of the Jews (40) was to place the corpse on a long sheet with the feet at one end of the sheet. They would then cover the corpse with thick layers of spices. They would then fold the cloth over the head and back down to the feet, which they would tie together. They would then tie the arms to the body with strips of cloth. Normally, a separate cloth covered the face.

John mentioned that a garden and an unused tomb were near the place of crucifixion (41). The tomb being new and unused sets the stage for the Resurrection—at which no other corpse would be in the tomb.

John implied that the burial of Jesus was hasty (42), probably because the day of preparation for the Sabbath was about to end with sundown.

Don't let fear of people keep you from speaking up about Jesus.