

He Was Buried  
Luke 23:50-56

The "Gospel", the "Good News of Jesus Christ" is given to us all throughout the scriptures, especially within the New Testament. But though we don't often recognize the wording being used as the "Gospel", it was actually also preached even in the Old Testament.

We read about that in the Book of Galatians chapter 3. There beginning in verse 6 we read,

<sup>6</sup> . . . Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? <sup>7</sup> Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." <sup>9</sup> So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:6-9)

We don't know what exact words God used as He preached the "Gospel" to Abraham, but we do know that it was exactly what Abraham needed for Him to be declared "Righteous".

And because of these words and others like them, we know that the word "Gospel" has come to have a broader definition and application than we often use.

But while that is true and for reasons we might not completely understand, our Lord has seen fit to condense its most well-defined meaning and message down into just three very distinct events . . . The death of the Lord Jesus, His burial and His resurrection.

Listen again to the way the "Gospel" is expressed in the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Verse 1,

<sup>1</sup> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1Corinthians 15:1-4)

Within these three events is the complete message of the gospel. Yes, Jesus' birth, His life, His teachings, His examples to us, and all the many other things that took place leading up to His death were of their own distinct importance. But the simple message of salvation that He came to bring to us is uniquely manifested within these three very special events, His death, His burial and His resurrection.

And now here in today's passage, Jesus had just fulfilled the first part of the Gospel. He had died to pay the penalty for our sins. He had breathed His last and surrendered up His Spirit into the loving hands of God His Father.

And then here, in these next words, He was entering into the second distinct part of the gospel, His "burial".

Listen again and follow along as I read these words in Luke 23, beginning in verse 50.

<sup>50</sup> Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man,  
<sup>51</sup> who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

<sup>52</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. <sup>54</sup> It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. <sup>55</sup> The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. <sup>56</sup> Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:50-56)

Note from these words, given in verse 54, that this last day in the life of the Lord Jesus took place at the end of a week, on a Friday. And that day of the week held special significance for those of the Jewish faith, because this day just preceding the Sabbath was regarded by them as being "the day of Preparation".

It was on this sixth day of each week that devout Jews made preparations for all of the necessities of the next day so as to avoid any form of work on the Sabbath.

They completed their week's work. They prepared food for the day ahead. And also very importantly, they carried out certain spiritual purifications.

But this particular day also held other, even greater significance in that this day was the "day of preparation" for the annual "Passover", that special celebration held each year to commemorate the day, long ago in Egypt, when the Israelites were delivered out of their bondage of slavery from the Egyptians, that day when all the Israelites were told to kill the Pascal Lamb and to spread its blood over the doorposts of their houses so that the death angel from God would "Pass over" their homes and families, and only the first born of the Egyptian households would be slain.

This was "Preparation Day" and Jesus, the perfect "Passover Lamb", the "Pascal Lamb", had been sacrificed, and His shed blood had been offered up as the perfect sacrifice, an acceptable offering to God the Father to justify the sins of men.

And although no one understood it at the time, beginning the very moment after Jesus breathed His last, and carrying forward throughout all of time, any person, Jew or Gentile, who would spread Jesus' precious blood across the doorposts of their lives, they would have eternal life and the death angel from God would forever "Pass over" them.

Thanks be to God, that is exactly what took place in those hours leading up to these moments that we read about here in this passage. And then here, as the day of preparation was drawing to a close, one more "preparation" needed to be accomplished.

The law, as given through Moses, required that Jesus' Body be removed from the cross and placed within a tomb.

And this very special man, Joseph of Arimathea, no doubt obeying unction from the Holy Spirit, had taken on that responsibility, here appealing to Pilate and then claiming the body of the Lord Jesus.

In the same account given in John chapter 19 we read,

<sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the

body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.

<sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

<sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:38-42)

These are delightful words in that although, we know that as a nation of people Jesus was rejected by His own Hebrew brethren, some did turn their hearts to Him. Here, two of the ruling counsel of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, boldly stepped forward, and by their actions demonstrated that the shed blood of the Lord Jesus had been effectual upon their souls.

This is very important for us to take note of. Here, within only a short time of His death, we can see the gospel beginning to do its mysterious work, first with the centurion and his men, and now with Joseph of Arimathea and with Nicodemus.

And again, may I emphasize the boldness of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. It is said here in these words that until this moment, this man Joseph had "secretly" been a disciple of Jesus. But now, his faith would no longer be held in secret.

And much the same is being inferred about Nicodemus, because you will recall that he had come to Jesus by night so as to hide the fact that he was seeking for answers to questions that were taking place in his troubled heart.

And it was on that night that Jesus told Nicodemus how he could be born again. So then, although these words do not say that Nicodemus was a disciple, his actions sure do boldly declare his belief in Christ.

And take note also that Joseph's behavior here reached on beyond simply getting Jesus' body down off the cross before Passover. He put Jesus' body in His own tomb, a place that was very honorable.

That is significant in that those who were declared to be criminals were supposed to be put into pauper's graves, far away from the burial sites of respectable people. Those prophetic words in Isaiah 53:9,

<sup>9</sup> And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death,  
Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.  
(Isaiah 53:9)

This is especially exciting for me to read because here we are able to see "holy boldness" begin to exert itself, first through the centurion and now through these two prominent men.

Yes, others had been bold, especially the women who followed after Jesus. And thanks be to God, women have continued to be the foundational pillars of the church.

But folks, God has uniquely called men to step forward and to be the "out-front" leaders. And praise be to God, we can see it beginning here.

And yes, no doubt both of these men would suffer consequences for their decision, as would the twelve disciples and many others. But such is the cost of discipleship.

. . . But may we return our thoughts back to the Lord Jesus and consider what might have taken place after those two men left Him alone there in the tomb, during that intervening time as He lay buried.

Much has been said and debated by bible scholars and theologians, but very little is spoken about here in these scriptures.

The most powerful "unspoken" truth that we find in this second part of the gospel that we can know for sure is that nothing Jesus ever did was "unimportant", miscellaneous or without purpose. Every moment and every event of His life, and now His death, had meaning and divine purposes.

Throughout His life, He was both Son of Man and Son of God. Now, in His death, He was fulfilling and completing His role as Son of Man and was here, entering back, more fully, into His other divine role as Son of God.

And as the Son of God, Jesus is God over all that exists, and not just that which can be “seen”. He is God over both the visible and the invisible, the physical world where we live and breathe and have our being, and also over that other dimension where angels and demons reside, that place that is spoken about by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6 where we read that,

<sup>12</sup> . . . we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.  
(Ephesians 6:12)

That unseen dimension, though being said here to be filled with demons, is also that place from where angels give you and me the aid, the comfort and the protection that we need as we wrestle against those demonic powers and principalities. Listen! These words from Hebrews 1:14,

<sup>14</sup> Are they (the angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)

As mysterious as all of these words sound, they confirm to us that while you and I live and go about our activities here in this physical world, there are so many, many other things taking place beneath the surface of our existence, battles that have one main focus, to gain mastery and control over the souls of men, yours and mine.

And I am confident that during those intervening days while Jesus was buried, He was engaged in the intimate details of defeating all of those hidden realms and all their power over us. In Colossians 2:15 we read,

<sup>15</sup> Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:15)

Yes, all three parts of the gospel accomplished the defeat over sin and death, especially the next part, the resurrection. But here, during these days of burial, I am confident that Jesus was using His power and His might to redeem you and me and to give us eternal life that can never again be taken from us.

How can we know that for sure? It is because the redemption of the souls of men has always been at the center of God’s plan since long before the foundations of the earth were ever laid.

Redemption was the reason for the first part of the gospel, His “death” on the cross. And redemption is at the heart of the third part of the gospel, His “resurrection”. So also then is His “burial”.

And though most all of the time that He remained there in the grave is kept as a mystery to us, we can have confidence that all that He did on our behalf during those days was not only needful for the salvation of our souls, but was also a demonstration of His might and His power as He went through the intimate process of defeating both the “power of death” and also the “sting of death”.

Before we close, may I give us one other part of the mystery that God has chosen to reveal to us about these special hours of His burial in the grave?

In 1 Peter chapter 3, the Apostle Peter speaks about a special mission of ministry that Jesus engaged in during those hidden hours of His burial. And yes, his words do introduce even more elements into this mystery, but we will still give some thought to his words. There, we read . . .

<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, (1 Peter 3:18-19)

And then also in 1 Peter 4:6 we read,

<sup>6</sup> For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Peter 4:6)

Much has been theorized about these special words. They do seem to suggest that during those days of His burial Jesus went into hell and preached to people who had died over time,

And that may be exactly what He did. And with mercy in our hearts, we hope that some such special opportunity was afforded to those dear souls, especially those who might never have had an opportunity to hear the gospel.

But we must not let these words lead us too far astray in our imagination, because according to many other of the scriptures, there really are no real “second chances” afforded to man after we die, especially to those who have had opportunity to hear the gospel during their lifetime.

In other words, Jesus is not going back and giving those people in hell “one more chance” at redemption.

Scriptures like those in Hebrews 9, provide us a clear understanding that once we breathe our last, we will immediately stand before God in judgment. Those words in Hebrews 9:27 . . .

<sup>27</sup> And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,  
(Hebrews 9:27)

So then, for today, we'll simply leave these words to remain as part of the mystery that we can't understand, at least for the present!

One last thought about this precious “Gospel” and about its special power. In Romans chapter 1, the Holy Spirit gave us these words through the writings of the Apostle Paul. There in chapter 1, verse 15 we read,

<sup>15</sup> I am eager to preach the gospel to you . . . <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes . . . <sup>17</sup> For in it (in the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”  
(Romans 1:15-17)

Folks, I don't pretend to know all that our Lord intends within these words about the “Gospel”. But as these precious words promise us, If we, by faith believe the “Gospel”, then the perfect righteousness of Christ will come to live and abide within our souls, and by its power, we will have salvation for an eternity. And praise be to God for that indescribable free gift.

May we close our study for today with the assuring word of Jesus spoken to the man who died next to Him on the cross . . . because for you and for me who have received Him as Savior and Lord, this will surely be our reward when we breathe our last.

There in Luke chapter 23, the man on the cross next to Jesus said,

<sup>42</sup> . . . "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." <sup>43</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

Pray with me.

