

Intro - Open to John 19:31

Death is a great enemy. We fear it because it is final. It is unknown. It is separation from life. On this Memorial Day Weekend, we remember our military personnel who died while serving and our own loved ones we lost this year. Death may be an end of life but it will not be the end.

One day we all will have a time of death. A birth certificate must confirm your time of birth. A death certificate will confirm your time of death. With Jesus' death, burial and empty tomb, we find confirmation that Jesus is who he claimed, both God and Man. These historical facts are what we will attest to this morning that confirm his identity much like the death certificates of today. In turn, it tells us a lot about how we are to think of our deaths and our bodies in death.

Jesus the God-Man confirmed his death, burial and resurrection so we would believe and have life.

Pray

One – Jesus' death confirmed

Read John 19:31-37

John uses the term “Day of Preparation” again to refer to the Friday, preparing for the Sabbath Saturday. This Sabbath was special on the week of the holy festival Passover. The law insisted that anyone hung for execution should not remain there overnight because this person was under God's curse and it would desecrate the land. Especially for this special sabbath, the hypocritical Jews would not have it. They would kill God where it pleased them and keep the law where it pleased them.

The Jews, most likely the chief priests, ask for the legs of the criminals to be broken so they will die before nightfall and be taken down. Roman crucifixion could last days but by taking an iron mallet and smashing their legs it would of course make them die faster. They would not have their legs to lift up and breathe. Their arms stretched out just simply don't have the strength or leverage to keep it up for long.

The torture was long, but death itself was sudden. Jesus just gave up his spirit. He did it on purpose. He finished the task in just a few hours.

The spear did not kill Jesus, the agony did not kill Jesus, his heart or lungs filling up with fluid did not kill Jesus. Jesus gave up his life, his spirit. **John 10:18 I have authority to lay my life down and authority to pick it up again.** He was not a victim in his death but a victor. He was sovereignly in control.

Death itself is sudden. Words cut short. Works unfinished. JRR Tolkien, the amazing author of the Lord of the Rings, tinkered with many stories that he never finished before he died. His son Christopher was named his literary executor in his will! Christopher worked for decades as an editor on many books that make up the extended stories of Middle Earth started from the ideas and stories started by his father.

We must know that this was not the case for Jesus. Jesus dies somewhat prematurely yet he accomplished after his death what Tolkien would've liked to do: Continue writing his story.

He is about to make an astounding claim, so he affirms his testimony is true. Verse 35: **He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.**

John, who saw the crucifixion, is emphatic that he firmly believes what he saw was orchestrated by God, so that he could witness and record it, why? **That you also may believe.** That Jesus truly died and the Romans confirmed his death.

Something odd happens. The Romans work their way outside in and when they get to Jesus, they notice he is already dead and do not break his legs. We must notice a second odd decision. They disobey orders, not breaking his legs, and do something different: pierce his side. Why would the Romans, in verse 34, pierce his heart to confirm his death? These Roman guards were used by God to fulfill two prophecies:

Exodus 12:46 – that the Passover lamb's bones should not be broken. Jesus is now the Passover lamb, he is prepared on preparation day. And **Zechariah 12:10** – that God will pour out his grace *“when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced. They shall mourn for him”*. Jesus is the one pierced because of our sins. We should mourn as John and the women did because God's son, the precious one, has died for us.

We are given these details of his death confirmed so as not to be swept up into heresies about the nature of Jesus.

One heresy about Jesus that we know was around in John's day was Docetism. This is a heresy that teaches that Jesus only seemed human, so he was only divine. John's letters specifically reject this heresy. Jesus was truly human and his apparent death so they didn't need to crush his legs and his pierced side where water and blood poured out are the confirmations.

So here is what is at stake, what John wants us to understand: If Jesus is not man, he cannot be the descendant of Adam promised in Genesis 3. Obedient where Adam was disobedient. If Jesus is not man, he cannot die and be the sacrificial lamb for the sins of mankind. If Jesus is not man, he could not become a curse in his flesh for us, be the scapegoat and reverse the curse of the fall.

All of these realities of his humanity, and therefore his death, are how he fulfills the law and sets humanity free from slavery to sin and death.

So first, God confirms Jesus' humanity through his death. Next, he confirms his body is connected to his divinity in his burial.

Two – Jesus' burial confirmed

[Read John 19:38-42](#)

Here we meet the dynamic duo of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph is introduced in each gospel account only here at the burial.

Nicodemus is the famous Sanhedrin member who comes to Jesus at night in John 3, where Jesus tells him he must be born again. And born again he must now be, because he has found in his fellow Jewish leader a co-laborer. Notice just two more details that John brings out about these men. Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus who is coming out of hiding. Nicodemus in a similar way was first introduced at night and is coming out in the day. Their fear and secrecy turned to bravery and honesty about their loyalties. At the time of Jesus' humiliation, he arranged for his highest-ranking Jews to break ranks and be his burial procession. To be his grave diggers, pall bearers and morticians.

Now there are a lot of details about his burial that are interesting and unique. First, criminals did not get their choice of burial plots. Most would hang on the cross for days until the vultures had their way. Then, the Jews would bury their criminals in a mass grave outside the city. It was certainly abnormal to get a private new grave. God's fingerprints are all over that.

Now Nicodemus had brought a considerable 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes. They used these spices for a speedy but clearly Jewish burial. The Jewish burial process was to be wrapped in linen and embalmed with spices. If you remember Lazarus who was covered in linen wraps when he came out of the grave in John 11.

Jesus is wrapped with a king's amount of myrrh and aloes which combined would make a fragrant gummy resin. Jesus's body was prepared to rot and smell and to be covered up by the spices sprinkled along the cloth strips and then packed underneath his body once placed in the tomb.

Why would they have buried him so completely and prepared him like this if they expected his resurrection? Short answer, they didn't expect it.

They have prepared his body and placed him in a tomb that Joseph had purchased either for Jesus, or for himself and he gives it to Jesus. Now again, the site on the Christianity tour of Jerusalem is not the actual burial place. That tomb just gives you an idea of what it would be like. Carved into a rock, with a bench for the body, with a large stone which would be rolled into an indentation to make it difficult to unseal for grave robbing.

He is rushed off the cross, into linens with spices and sealed into a tomb in a large significant garden (hence next week's gardener) before the end of the day. The care taken with his body, providentially, was with both divine and human work. God and Man.

Now if Jesus' death confirmation tells us something of his humanity, I believe his burial tells us something of Jesus' nature as both human and divine. They are inseparable. He is the embodied God. This comes to another term that you can learn or just focus on the concept but it is the Hypostatic Union – Jesus is fully God and fully man. His basic essence is not two, it is one. We cannot separate him being God and Man. He is the God-Man. It is also said this way, Jesus is truly God and truly man.

[Colossians 2:9](#) For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

He is not a 2 for 1 deal. Jesus is not half God and half man. He isn't some percentage combination of the two. He is as fully human as you and me, yet He is as fully God as he always has been.

Jesus has been confirmed dead as a human, and buried with the reverence that his body is not separate from his essence but is cared for as if even when dead, his body is still Jesus. He doesn't abandon his body, he preserves it. So, let's find out why, with the empty tomb.

Three – Jesus' empty tomb confirmed

Read John 20:1-10

On the first day of the week, being Sunday makes us always scratch our heads how you get 3 days from Friday to Sunday. Any part of a day was considered a full day in Jewish calendaring. When Jesus is buried on Friday, day 1, in the tomb Saturday, day 2, and in the grave just briefly on Sunday, now the Lord's Day, day 3 before his resurrection. This fulfills the three days he predicted. Don't think in hours, think in days counted. Fri, Sat, Sun.

Mary Magdalene is a key witness both for this text and what we will look at next week. She arrives before the other women, sees the empty tomb and likely thought grave robbers had stolen his body. Instead, Jesus had been raised, angels had frightened away the Roman guards and rolled away the stone so that Mary could find the empty tomb. But Mary can only report what she has seen. She runs past the other women, to tell the disciples. Mary is reporting that Jesus' body is stolen. No one corrects her that he is to be resurrected. They react and inspect themselves. No one understood, yet.

Now unsurprisingly, the author John and "quick-to-act" Peter are running to the tomb. John faster than Peter. When John looks in, this begins in the Greek a progression of terms for the word "see". We use words in English that mean the same thing but carry slightly different meanings. We see, we peek, we stare, we look. So in verse 5, it is just John peeking into the tomb. When Peter gets to the tomb he doesn't hesitate but going into inspect and "sees" which is not just a peek but an inspection or experience. He is taking in the scene with the cloths oddly lying there as if the body has vanished but the head piece is folded by itself. Then John works up his courage and entered where he "saw and believed". He is not just seeing, but understanding something is different than a grave robbery. It is like God has tampered with the tomb. He wasn't simply stolen; Jesus is up to something.

Let's think back again to Lazarus's resurrection, John 11:44, he is resurrected in his current body. Grave clothes still clinging to him where he needs help to be unwrapped. Jesus's body seems to pass through or disappear from within the linens. Grave robbers, looking to take the spices

or other valuables he might have on his person would have torn off the grave clothes or taken the body with the clothes on so as to bring all the expensive spices on the linens. Are you seeing the scene that John is describing? It completely counteracts the claim by the Jewish leaders in Matthew 28:11-15 that the disciples stole the body.

Now, I think that Peter and John are seeing and believing but not with a faith in resurrection. They have a glimpse of what resurrection could mean for the world, but they would come to know more fully with the presence of the Holy Spirit to understand all the scriptures as pointing to this moment they have just experienced. So they turn and go home. They know something is going on, but they did not search for him as if resurrected. So I am convinced that they did not know what to make of the orderly grave yet. They just knew Jesus was not there.

The empty tomb completes this understanding of Jesus' nature as the God-Man. He is truly human, able to die, bleed, be pierced and killed for our transgressions. He is both God and Man because his burial treats his body as honored. Now, his body is taken up. It is resurrected, not like Lazarus, but like nothing seen before and nothing we will see until the last days where the bodies of the saints will be remade in resurrected bodies. We will focus on that next week.

Jesus was buried in a tradition that would preserve and honor his body for resurrection. This struck me this week as a very practical understanding of how we should understand burial even today. God created our body. He created Jesus' body. He now takes his body away so it can be recreated.

Just like Jesus, he will recreate the bodies of those who are saved in resurrection. When a Christian dies, we bury them as a visible sign that their body is still a part of who they are and will be. This is why I believe Christians should be buried and not cremated. It should be treated with the knowledge that one day, soon, or after this body has turned to dust that Jesus will bring resurrection. Now I understand that your loved ones may be cremated. I hope you understand I do not believe it is a sin to opt for cremation. Yet if you read 1 Corinthians 15:35-57 it is helpful to see that this body may be perishable but it will be taken up as imperishable. Jesus' physical body was not discarded and exchanged for a new imperishable body. His old body didn't lie in the tomb while he walked around resurrected. It was reused, remade. His perishable body was swallowed up, it was somehow incorporated into his new imperishable body.

Conclusion

The God-Man died. John is a witness and testifies to the truthfulness of his death, burial and empty tomb.

We cannot head into the resurrection appearances without this belief. That it wasn't just a man who died, and it wasn't just a spirit of God pretending to die. God became a man so that while his body died, he would provide salvation in his death and resurrection. He left behind an empty cross, He left behind an empty tomb as a reminder that these were not the final words. The sin that held him to the cross has been dealt with. The wages of sin, of death, has been cancelled as we see that empty tomb.

Warren Wiersbe, says that "The empty cross and empty tomb are God's "receipts" telling us that the debt of sin has been paid in full."

I typically don't keep receipts but these are worth keeping and marveling at. Death is defeated on the cross. New life is promised in the empty tomb.

Jesus the God-Man confirmed his death, burial and resurrection so we would believe and have life.

His nature as God and Man is of the upmost importance for us as we consider our future. What happens to our body? What happens to our life after death? Can we be sure of resurrection?

Since Jesus became a man, he could die in your place. You can know that your death will be temporary. Since Jesus was God, he perfectly paid the price and rose again, guaranteeing our resurrection.