

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are  
Most Surely Believed Among Us  
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke  
Chapter 23- **Luke 23:47-56**  
349- Wondrous Events After the Crucifixion

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May 28, 2017

**Luke 23:47-56**

**47** Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he *began* praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent."

**48** And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, *began* to return, beating their breasts.

**49** And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

**50** And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man

**51** (he had not consented to their plan and action), *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;

**52** this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

**53** And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.

**54** It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

**55** Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

**56** Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

To the Glory of God

Now the time between the Death of Jesus and His Resurrection was a very strange time. It had to be the most confusing time for any true believer, *especially* those men whom Jesus had chosen to become the Apostles. We know from our previous messages that among the remaining 11 disciples, only Peter and John followed Jesus to the

courtyard where Jesus had been interrogated and beaten. But, the Gospel writers say that of all the eleven men whom Jesus had personally chosen, only John was present at Golgotha to actually witness the Crucifixion. And the Bible tells us that John was there with several women.

Now those who had put their trust in Jesus had just watched their Savior die. They could scarcely believe that God would permit their beloved Leader to be arrested, interrogated, and beaten, but it was *beyond* belief that Jesus would actually die. They had all been so sure that Jesus was the One. And now He is dead. And it was all so confusing. And there were so many questions. Like, *"What are they supposed to do now? What does God expect from us now that Jesus is dead? Are we supposed to assemble the army and go to war against the Romans? How is the Death of their Lord and Master supposed to be a good thing? Where was God in all of this? Why didn't God defend Jesus? Why were pagan barbarians allowed to triumph over their King? How are we supposed to put all these pieces together?"*

These men had been the closest to Jesus *personally*, and Jesus had invested the most time with them teaching them Divine Truth. And they had been the ones who had forsaken *everything*, their jobs, their occupations, and some, even their families. For what? For three and a half years they had focused almost exclusively on Jesus, on Who He was and what He said and what He did. But now their thoughts turned back to themselves. *What is going to happen to me now that Jesus is gone? If they can do this to Jesus, what will they do to me?*

To a man, they had believed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, even though just what the Messiah was supposed to do when He got here was still pretty unclear to them. At this point, the Messiah that the disciples were looking for was a *military* leader, a man who would gather an amazing army of Jews, who would engage in a literal war with the pagan armies of Rome, and drive them from the land that God had given to them through the Promise of Abraham. So, in their mind, the Messiah was supposed to win, to triumph, and yet, Jesus is now dead. *And where is Peter? Wasn't Peter the one who was the closest to Him?*

Now there is no doubt that what Jesus had told them was somewhere in the back of their minds. They remembered that Jesus had said:

## Mark 10:33-34

**33 ...Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles.**

**34 "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again."**

... but that was before Jesus died. This was just too much, even for them. *If only we could ask Him what was going on. He would help us through this. Maybe we could ask Peter. Has anyone seen Peter since Thursday night?*

But, as confusing as all these events over the last couple of days had been, there were astounding miracles that had taken place that made these men understand that this was not a normal death. There were at least four amazing supernatural events that had taken place since noon that spoke to the uniqueness of Jesus' Death:

1. A strange darkness
2. The Veil had been torn
3. A great earthquake
4. An amazing Resurrection

As we have already discovered, the Gospel writers tell us that since noon, as Jesus was hanging in agony on the Cross, there has been a strange and pervasive darkness that had come upon the land. And this darkness is strange for a number of reasons. First of all, there is no mention of rain or even wind being with this darkness. Now there might have been both, but the Bible doesn't say there was. So, it could have been simply a darkness. And this meant it was very different from the darkness that accompanies mid-day rain.

But another strange aspect of this darkness is the fact that the Scriptures say from noon until Jesus died, the darkness was upon the land. But does that mean that as soon as Jesus died, that this darkness lifted? We don't know for sure. It may have. And if so, then the darkness would have lasted for three hours, and then lifted. But, it could have been that, even now, even after Jesus was dead, the darkness persisted. And we can surmise that this darkness was a Sign that God was angry, but the darkness is strange indeed.

Another more understandable Sign was that while people were in the Temple praying and worshipping that the veil in the Temple that separated them from the Holy of Holies was split from top to bottom, signifying that the Old Covenant was abolished and the New Covenant was being instituted upon the earth. But the main reason that this miracle is easier for us to understand is because the writer of the **Epistle to the Hebrews** tells us about it.

But, now look carefully again at what Dr. Luke wrote in verse 47:

**Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he *began* praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent."**

Now the title “**centurion**” meant that this man was a commanding officer over 100 men. So, this was a highly trained, battle-hardened military leader. And since he was near the Cross, evidently he was the one in charge. And Luke tells us that when this man “**saw what had happened**”, he responded. Now the phrase “**saw what had happened**” includes the way that Jesus suffered and died, as well as all of the supernatural signs that was going on during and immediately after His Death.

Contrary to what this centurion was used to witnessing, Jesus never begged for His Life. He never pleaded with His captors to have mercy on Him or let Him go. He never asked that His Life be spared. This centurion was used to hearing the cries and screams and groanings of human being as they were crucified. But nothing prepared him for what he heard Jesus say while dying on the Cross.

This centurion had been close enough to hear the exchange between Jesus and the two robbers. And he had seen the one robber turn and stop railing out against Jesus, and ask Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His Kingdom. And this Roman had heard Jesus tell this pathetic man who was about to die:

**Luke 23:43**

**Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.**

This centurion had heard all of the railing accusations against Jesus and watched this man suffer and die with a dignity that he had never seen before. He had heard Jesus pray:

**Luke 23:34**

**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.**

This centurion witnessed the strange darkness that came upon the land at noon that had lasted for three hours. He had heard Jesus tell one of his disciples to care for His mother, and then he had heard Jesus scream out:

**Mark 15:34**

**ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?**

He had seen Jesus refuse the *first* wine, which had been mixed with myrrh and would have made His agony a little *easier* to endure. And then this man heard Jesus say:

**John 19:28**

**I am thirsty**

... for the wine that would have *prolonged* His suffering. And this Roman centurion would have heard the commotion being made, something about the veil in the Temple being torn in two. And then he had heard Jesus scream out:

**John 19:30**

**It is finished!**

... and

**Luke 23:46**

**Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.**

... and he watched Jesus die.

Now, whoever was in charge of the crucifixions had to remain with the prisoners until they were dead. And so, it was probably this very centurion who ordered that the legs of the ones being crucified would be broken, to speed up their deaths. And they broke the legs of the two robbers, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. And then this man saw and felt this massive earthquake.

Now while Luke tells us that this centurion publicly acknowledged Jesus' Innocence, **Matthew 27:54** tells us this:

**Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"**

... indicating that the other soldiers who were with this centurion may have also believed. So, if you believe, as I do, that sinners are saved by what they "believe", by what they "confess", and what they "trust in", and *not* by what they "do", then it is very possible that these battle-hardened Roman soldiers became the very first converts to Jesus, immediately after He died. And that means that even now, at the worst possible moment for the disciples of Jesus, that God's amazing Grace was powerfully at work to save these pagans.

Now I cannot find any extra-biblical comments about this earthquake. None of the ancient historians wrote anything about it, as far as I can find. And this tells us that it may not have been your average earthquake. This may have been nothing more than an unmistakable Sign to these Roman soldiers to save their souls, and *not* the normal kind of earthquake that would cause great damage. A similar earthquake occurred with Paul and Silas over in **The Acts 16**- please go there with me.

#### **The Acts 16:22-34**

**22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods.**

**23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;**

**24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

**25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;**

**26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.**

**27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.**

**28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"**

**29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,**

**30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

**31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."**

**32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.**

**33 And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.**

**34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.**

So, *this* was not the kind of earthquake that people normally experience. *This* was the kind of earthquake that didn't do any damage except open all the jail doors and shake off all the chains of all the godly prisoners that led to the conversion of the jailer. *That* kind of earthquake. And the earthquake in **Luke 23** was not normal either. It was the kind of earthquake that split the veil in the Temple and converted Roman centurions.

But now we come to one of the strangest of the Signs that occurred at the moment that Jesus died. Here is what the Apostle Levi wrote:

**Matthew 27:52-53**

**52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;**

**53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.**

Now, *this* would have made the front page of the newspapers. *This* would have been something that would have shaken all of Jerusalem. For many of the dead saints to physically rise from the dead and walk into Jerusalem and appear to many would have been one of the most amazing Signs ever done. And yet, I can find absolutely *nothing* in ancient historical writings that discuss this. And there are

some very strange aspects and unanswered questions about this miracle:

- ✓ Who were these saints?
- ✓ Why did they rise immediately upon the Death of Jesus and yet before Jesus Himself rose from the dead?
- ✓ What did they tell the people who saw them?
- ✓ Where did they go after they appeared to many?
- ✓ Why is there nothing else said about this?

Now there are a lot of things I could say about this, but straight out of the box, let me re-enforce to you that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of the living God. And the **Gospel of Matthew** records this miracle and that makes it to be true. So, this happened. And, trying my hardest to avoid speculation, I don't know or understand any more than what is written here.

Now obviously, these people were Old Testament saints. But what was the criteria as to *which* saints rose here? Why not *all* of the Old Testament saints? Why just these? Maybe it was all of the saints who had died and were buried in Jerusalem, which would have eliminated most of the famous ones that we know, like Abraham, Noah, and Moses, etc., who were buried someplace else.

But why didn't Paul or John or Peter reference this in their Epistles? Why didn't the Jewish historian, Josephus, write about it? This would have been a big deal, and yet, all we have is silence. And so, one answer I will offer you is that there must be other books, other historical writings, that we have not found yet that talk about this amazing miracle and put some biblical importance to it. And we may never find out more than we read here. And that is okay, this happened.

Now as powerful as these miracles were, they were not the greatest. The greatest miracle is the conversion of these hard-hearted Roman soldiers. And so, when Dr. Luke says,

**... when the centurion saw what had happened ...**

... he is talking about all of these signs and miracles.



Now let me say one more thing here before we move on. God's Word says that when the centurion (and the soldiers -**Matthew 27:54**) "**saw what happened**" he responded in faith. And that means that this is an amazing example of Salvation that is out of the ordinary. Because the Bible declares that Salvation in Jesus Christ comes by a very precise way:

- ✓ The Gospel must be preached
- ✓ The Gospel must be heard and understood
- ✓ The Gospel must be believed

... and that is why we are commanded by the Lord Christ to "**go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation**" (**Mark 16:15**). So, as the foolishness of the Gospel preached is carried out, God performs a miracle and grants Regeneration to those chosen for Salvation. And with those new eyes and ears that God sovereignly gives in the miracle of the New Birth the Gospel is heard. And with that new soft heart that God has sovereignly given, the individual has the desire and power to believe and to trust in Jesus Personally and in His finished Work for Salvation.

So, believing and trusting and confessing and repenting, everything we "do" to become justified before God, are *not* things that we *initiate* or that we simply "choose" to do. No, all that we "do" are all human *responses* to the sovereign Work that God the Holy Spirit has already done in the individual, through the miracle of the New Birth. And the catalyst of the New Birth is the faithful and full heralding of the glorious biblical Gospel.

And so, the Bible is crystal clear about this, *nobody* is saved apart from hearing and believing the Gospel. And that means that nobody is saved through the manifestation of miracles or signs and wonders or miraculous healings or other supernatural demonstrations. Salvation comes only "by" Grace and "through" Faith and *not* by works, not even noble religious or miraculous works.

And this is the very heart and soul of biblical Christianity. So, without the firm and stable and unbending tenet of:

Justification by Faith Alone (Sola Fide)

... we no longer have biblical Christianity. And so, we categorically reject and condemn any preaching or teaching from any group or person that denies that Salvation is entirely "by" God's amazing Grace *alone*, and it is solely "through" the gift of saving Faith *alone*, and it is in Jesus Christ personally and in His finished Work *alone*, and is *not* accomplished by partaking of the sacraments or by being baptized or by performing good works.

And yet, these Romans soldiers appear to come to repentance and faith in Jesus *without* hearing the Gospel preached. So, what are we to make of this? Were they really saved? And if so, why can't others be saved the same way *without* hearing the Gospel preached?

No. People today must hear the Gospel preached if they are to be saved. And so, if these Roman soldiers were truly saved, it was only because they were among the very few people in the history of the world that were able to actually "witness" the Gospel first hand. And so, they didn't "hear" the Gospel preached, they "saw" it when Jesus suffered and was crucified and died, and they were sovereignly given the desire and ability to repent and believe based on what they personally witnessed about Jesus. But, it is very important that we also say that once Jesus rose from the dead, these men would be required to believe in that as well.

Now it wasn't only the Roman soldiers. Look at what Dr. Luke wrote next:

**48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, *began* to return, beating their breasts.**

**49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.**

... so, all "these things", the Suffering and Death of Jesus, the strange darkness, the earthquake, the veil being torn in two, and the resurrection of many of the Old Testament saints, all of these amazing and strange Signs caused the crowds and Jesus' acquaintances and the women to beat their chests in anguish and amazement. But notice that it doesn't mention the "disciples" by name here. It merely calls them "acquaintances", even though he lets us know that the women were there. And Luke is also careful to not mention Peter either.

Now the term “acquaintances” might refer to other people, the *mathates*, the “students” who followed Jesus everywhere, even though this is the only time he used the term “acquaintance”. But it might also be a slight insult to the disciples who should have been standing tall at this moment, and yet, were at a distance with the women. Besides John, everyone else kept their distance from Jesus. And so, Dr. Luke may have been putting down on the men who should have been “front and center” here, but were not. And the absence of any mention of Peter here is very loud indeed.

Next, Dr. Luke wants us to meet a man named “Joseph”:

### **Luke 23:50-51**

**50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man**

**51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;**

Now, right off the bat, we know several things about this man:

- ✓ He was a member of “the Council” (Sanhedrin)
- ✓ He was a “good and righteous man”
- ✓ He had not consented to their plan and action to kill Jesus
- ✓ He was “waiting” for the Kingdom of God
- ✓ He was from Arimathea

Now, in **Matthew 27:57**, the Apostle Levi gives us some *additional* information about this man:

- ✓ He was rich
- ✓ He had become a disciple of Jesus

... and in **Mark 15:43**, John Mark tells us that this Joseph was:

- ✓ A *prominent* member of the Council

... while in **John 19:38**, the Apostle John said that Joseph was:

- ✓ A “secret” disciple

... for fear of the Jews.

So, *this* Joseph was a wealthy and respected Jewish Elder, part of the ruling Sanhedrin Council. And he was what we would call “well-connected”. So, this Joseph moved in the circles of society that would have allowed him access to the most important people, both in the Jewish world as well as the Roman. But because of his position, this Joseph had been very careful to keep his love and devotion to Jesus a secret, until now.

So, in a real sense, Joseph was a coward. The fear he had about his belief in Jesus was paralyzing. It stopped him from any public affirmation. And it is important that we understand that this silence dishonored his Lord. Joseph was more fearful of what he might lose by being open and faithful about “Who Jesus is” than he was in failing the Lord Who saved him. And, for *that*, he is to forever be shamed.

But thank God, it isn't the way a man *begins* his walk with Jesus that is nearly as important as how he *ends*. And so, we don't stop by looking at the cowardly way that Joseph *began*, but rather how he finally came to publicly affirm his faith and trust in Jesus.

So, even though he had begun his walk with God by being afraid to reveal his trust in Jesus as the true Messiah, Joseph didn't remain a coward. The fact that he is identified with Jesus here at His Burial proves to us that whatever fear he may have had, he faced it, in the Power of the Holy Spirit, and had overcome it. And, for that, he is to be greatly admired.

Now the city is called “Arimathea”. And it was in Judea. And the original Greek has a hard “breathing mark” at the beginning of this word, and so, its original name was “Harimathea”, which corresponds to the Jewish “Haramathaim”. But, the original Aramaic translation of this city over in **John 19:38** has it as “Har-Ramtha”, which, when anglicized, drops the “Har” and reads “Ramath”, or simply “Ramah”. Now back in the third century, the first Church historian, Eusebius, said that this city was “Ramathaim- Zophin”, which was a town in Ephraim.<sup>1</sup> And **1 Samuel 1:1&19** tells us that David met with Samuel there. Now in verse 52, Dr. Luke tells us:

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius; *Onomasticon* 144:28&29

**Luke 23:52**

**this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.**

Levi says:

**Matthew 27:58**

**This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given *to him*.**

... while Peter's disciple, John Mark goes into even greater detail:

**Mark 15:43b-45**

**43 ... and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.**

**44 Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead.**

**45 And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.**

Now, if Joseph was wealthy and had connections, why did he have to "gather up courage" to go to Pilate to ask for Jesus' Body? Because the only reason anyone would want Jesus' Body was because they believed in Him and were part of Him. So, Joseph knew that as soon as he asked for Jesus' Body, his secret would be known and he would suffer persecution. And part of this man's punishment would be his removal from the Sanhedrin and ostracized from Roman influence.

You see, even today, there is great stigma attached to the family and friends of people who have been convicted of terrible crimes and executed. Many times, they are left destitute and have a hard time even finding work. And as soon as their bosses find out that their friend or loved one was executed for heinous offenses, many times they are fired and driven out. The children of convicted criminals suffer unbelievably and many of them live very hard lives.

Back when Christianity was an illegal religion, those who associated with the faithful martyrs were, many times, themselves martyred. The family and friends of saints, who were imprisoned or killed, lived lives of great hardship and poverty as neither the Jews nor the Romans would hire them. And even publicly associating with murdered saints was very dangerous. In **The Book of the Acts 8**, after

the first Deacon, Stephen, was stoned to death, we read this, beginning with verse 1:

**Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him [Stephen] to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

So, as soon as Stephen was martyred, great persecution began against the Church. What was the response of the believers to this great danger? Look at verse 2:

**The Acts 8:2**

***Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.***

Now, to bury Stephen meant that these “devout men” had to go to the Jewish authorities to ask for his body, just like Joseph did with Jesus. And as soon as they did that, everyone knew that they were with Stephen. And when Dr. Luke said that these devout men:

**... made loud lamentation over him [Stephen]**

... that means that they *unashamedly* cried and publicly mourned his death, so that everybody in Jerusalem would understand, “*We’re with Stephen. We believe what he believed. We are his brothers in Christ.*” And what was the result of this public show of affection for a martyred brother?

**The Acts 8:3b**

**... Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.**

Now when the New Testament commands believers to visit the prisons, it isn't talking about preaching the Gospel to murderers and thieves and dope dealers and other ungodly criminals. Now, I think it is good to do that, and I thank God for those of you who inconvenience yourselves on a regular basis and are faithful to go to the prisons to preach the Gospel to unsaved criminals.

But when the New Testament commands us to do that, it is referring to the believers who have been imprisoned because of their faith. And many times, when saints would go into the prisons to pray with and comfort and encourage their fellow, laborers to remain faithful, even to the point of death, simply by associating with the imprisoned believers caused them to be put in jail as well.

When the Bible commands us to allow strangers to eat and stay in our homes, when people did that to traveling Christians, it meant that the entire family might be subject to losing everything they had, up to and including their own lives.

Now with so much danger and with so much risk during those formative years of the Church, you would think that God would understand, and that out of Love He would *suspend* His Command for His people to visit the jails and to open their homes to strangers. And yet, we find just the opposite was true. The collective testimony of the early Church was that many saints, most of whom we will never even know their names until we get over there, voluntarily, gladly, joyfully risked everything they owned, even their lives and the lives of their wives and children, so as to be faithful to the clear Command of the Savior Who said:

**John 15:18-20**

**18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated you.***

**19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.**

**20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.**

So, by going to Pilate to ask for Jesus' Body, this well-respected and wealthy Joseph was voluntarily risking everything he had so he could be associated with Jesus. And, no doubt, as Joseph was working up the courage to go to Pilate to ask for Jesus' Body, the Words of Jesus were ringing in his ears when Jesus said:

**Luke 9:23-26**

**23 ... If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**

**24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.**

**25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?**

**26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.***

Dear friend, do not look at what you might lose in your effort to be faithful to Jesus. You came into this world naked and you will leave naked. And everything you own right now is a gracious gift from a loving Savior to you, who are unworthy to own it. Do not say, "*What will happen to me if I am faithful to Jesus?*" Rather say, "*What will happen to Jesus; what will happen to His great Name and to His Honor and Glory if I am not faithful to Him?*"

Now there is much talk about commitment in the modern Church. It seems that every Church is looking for people to be committed. But I will tell you that human commitment is the last thing God looks for. God isn't looking for heroes or people who are brave, dear friends. God is seeking to save people who have been shown how weak they really are. God is looking for spiritually poor people, who have been gifted by God to understand that there is no good thing in them. God is seeking for people who have been blessed to understand that Christianity is not about us becoming a giant, but that we serve a Savior Who is greater than any giant.

Jesus doesn't choose people who desire to be made much of, but people who have been graced to come to the end of themselves, strange people who are broken and of a contrite spirit, and those who tremble at God's Word.

And people like that are not "committed". Serving the Lord Christ is not about psyching yourself up. It isn't about "Think and Grow Rich". Serving Jesus is about surrendering. It isn't about struggling to get to the top so you can be first, it is about struggling to go down, to the bottom, to serve, and so that others may go ahead of you. And people like that are not committed, they are willing to die for Jesus. People



like that are willing to perish rather than sin. They would rather lose it all and have Jesus than gain it all and lose Jesus.

We must understand that this sin-cursed world is not impressed with your financial success or your courage or your disciplined life. The world will not be impressed with your knowledge of the Bible or your healthy body or your material possessions. What the world longs to see is that the collective testimony of the Christian Church is this:

Jesus is better than anything I can own in this life and that makes Him better than anything that evil people can take away from me.

... and, when that becomes true, they will begin to recognize that you have been with Jesus.

So, without knowing what might happen, Joseph overcame his fear and risked it all to ask for the Body of Jesus. But, instead of being imprisoned, or instead of being killed, or instead of having all of his earthly goods confiscated, all that happened this time was that Pilate gave Joseph the Body of Jesus.

Now, in **John 19:39**, the Apostle John tells us that not only Joseph risked everything, but that another Jewish ruler also came to the Body of Jesus.

**Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*.**

So, here was the ruler of the Jews, who, in **John 3**, had come to Jesus by night to discuss what the miracle of the New Birth was really all about. And here he is also helping Joseph with the Body of Jesus, risking everything by associating himself with the Crucified Lord. Even though there is no hint in **John 3** that Nicodemus believed, the fact that he is mentioned here, with the dead Body of Jesus, proves that he did believe.

And then Luke tells us this:

**Luke 23:53**

**And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.**

But the Apostle Levi gives us additional information:

**Matthew 27:59-60**

**59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,  
60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.**

... so here we see that the tomb in which Jesus was laid was actually Joseph's personal burial place. And so, Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Now normally, the Romans took the dead Jews who had been crucified and they threw them into a ditch. And this was the final insult against people the Romans considered to be filth. No funeral, no final preparation, no wrappings; they just threw them into a ditch.

And as a Jew Who had been Crucified, Jesus would have been just thrown into a ditch had Joseph and Nicodemus not intervened. So, without overcoming their fear of their conversion being known, the sinless Lord of Glory would have been unceremoniously thrown into a ditch. But, what is even more important than these two men overcoming their fear is that this was all a fulfillment of an ancient Prophecy. Isaiah had spoken about 600 year earlier:

**Isaiah 53:9**

**His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**

... so even though the original "assignment" for Jesus was to be thrown into a ditch along with all the other Jews, who were criminals, God moved upon Joseph to allow this section of God's Word to be fulfilled.

Now there were various types of rock tombs in the first century, and so, we're not certain just how this one was set up. But what we do know is that it was large enough for people to actually walk into it. After the Resurrection, the Apostle John wrote this in **John 20:3b-6**:

**3 ...Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.  
4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;**

**5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in.**

**6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*,**

... so, John was able to stoop to look into the tomb, while Peter was able to actually walk into it.

Now some carved tombs had a small shelf on the far side that was carved out of the rock where the dead were laid. And this may have been the way it was with Jesus. So, both Joseph and Nicodemus allowed for Jesus' Body to be properly prepared for death, and then they would have carried His Body into the tomb and placed it on this carved shelf.

Now the "large stone" that was rolled against the entrance of the tomb was a huge limestone boulder. And it was carved to fit tight against the opening, so animals could not get in. Now look at what Dr. Luke wrote:

#### **Luke 23:54-56**

**54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.**

**55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.**

**56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.**

Now we usually begin our days in the morning, when we rise. But during Creation in the Book of **Genesis**, God began the first 24-hour division of time like this:

#### **Genesis 1:5b**

**... And there was evening and there was morning, one day.**

So, a "day" begins at sundown and goes until the next sundown. In the Old Testament, each 24-hour division of time called a "day" goes from sundown to sundown. So, the Old Testament Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and extends until sundown on Saturday.

Now the Bible tells us that Jesus died at about 3pm on that particular Friday. And so, by the time they got Him off the Cross and

washed His Body and anointed Him with the spices and wrapped Him for burial, sundown was fast approaching. And so, there was an urgency to finish this task before the Sabbath began at sundown. And Luke is careful to tell us that their efforts paid off and they completed their task of preparing Jesus for burial just before the sun set on that Friday and the Sabbath was upon them.

So, even though these first few moments immediately after the Death of Jesus by Crucifixion had to be the most troubling and confusing time for the disciples, God was very busy at Work, fulfilling His Word and demonstrating great Signs and Wonders, and also by fulfilling the main thrust of Jesus' entire Ministry to seek and to save that which was lost.

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.