

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-24 Jesus Buried

The saddest event of life is saying goodbye and burying a loved one. It is even more difficult when those outside the family do not understand our loss. Jesus tried to prepare the disciples for his death in advance. He told them, "Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.... I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will take your joy" (John 16:20, 22). First, they had to experience the separation death brought.

The moment Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. 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!" (Matt 27:51-54).

Jesus died as a victor. He had completed what he came to do, saying, "It is finished." At the death of Jesus a great change occurred in the spirit world. Satan, sin, and death were defeated. God opened a new way for people to go directly into his presence. The temple curtain had separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. No longer was it a barrier that separated God and humans. The tearing of the curtain signified Christ's making it possible for believers to draw near to God. In its place Christ became the door for all through his sacrificial death. We now "have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body" (Heb 10:19-20).

The Passover meal had been eaten on Thursday evening. Friday was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. The Sabbath would begin at sundown. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. Breaking the legs hastened death, because the victim could not put any weight on his legs and breathing immediately became difficult. Death took only a few minutes. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

When they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. This act may have been to make sure Jesus was dead or simply evil brutality. The flow of blood and water indicates that the spear pierced Christ's heart and the watery sac around it. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken (Psa 34:20)," Another prophecy of the end times says, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced" (Zech 12:10). It was amazing that Jesus was the only one of the three whose legs were not broken. He also suffered a spear thrust to the heart, without it breaking a rib (John 19: 31-37).

As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea came. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action (Luke 23:50-51). He had become a disciple of Jesus, and was waiting for the Kingdom of God. Going boldly to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Crucifixion could involve days of agony before the person died. The early death of Jesus was therefore extraordinary. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph (Mark 15:42-45).

He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the Pharisee who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 35 kilos (75 pounds). Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of clean linen cloth. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs (John 19:39-40).

They gave Jesus an honorable burial and placed him in Joseph's new tomb. It had been cut out of the rock, not far from the crucifixion site. This too fulfilled part of the prophecy of Isaiah, "He was assigned a grave ... with the rich in his death" (Isa 53:9). They rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. Joseph undoubtedly acted out of love, feeling he had been forgiven much.

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 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." They considered the first deception to be that Jesus was the Messiah. The second would be that he had risen as the Son of God.

"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how. So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard" (Matt 27:57-66).

The religious leaders understood this most important claim that Jesus had made—that he would rise from the dead. They realized that if crowds believed this lie the situation could be even worse than before. If they thought their Messiah had conquered death, they would never stop spreading their 'false doctrine.' The religious leaders had no idea what was about to happen!

This story is **important** because it confirms the many people who witnessed firsthand that Jesus did die on the cross and that he was buried in a tomb, as he had said he would.

The **main truth** of this story is that even the details of Jesus' death and burial had been foretold by prophets centuries earlier. Everything happened according to God's plan.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What happened in the spiritual realm when Jesus died on the cross?

A. [Pause] If you said that when Jesus died on the cross sin, Satan and death were defeated and God opened a new way for people to come to him, you are correct.

2. What did the Roman soldier do to Jesus on the cross to make sure that he was dead?

A. [Pause] If you said, “The soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear and blood and water flowed out,” you are right.

3. What did Jesus predict would happen after his death that greatly disturbed the Pharisees and chief priests?

A. [Pause] If you answered that the chief priests and Pharisees were disturbed because Jesus predicted that he would rise again after three days, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell it to a few believers, ask them to meditate on Jesus’ death and burial. What can we learn about relationships from the characters mentioned?