

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

DEAD & BURIED

Jesus was dead. Of this there is no doubt. Eyewitness testimony establishes it beyond question. If Spock and McCoy were there, they would report to Captain Kirk, "He's dead, Jim." Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record it. Roman historians Tacitus, Pliny, Lucian agree, as do Jewish sources Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud. John 19 includes numerous details, and even names names.

1- Jesus DIED. God's Law prescribed the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, His blood to atone for sin. Jesus fulfills numerous Scriptures, as Isaiah 53 "*the LORD laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and poured out His soul to death.*" Contrary to Islam, Jesus most assuredly suffered, was crucified, dead, buried.

Criminals convicted of sedition were usually left for the vultures. Deut 21:23 says corpses would defile the land, especially on a Sabbath in a major festival. God raised up two independent witnesses for the burial of Jesus. They likely paid a high price for being acknowledged as disciples, losing personal resources and reputation. They had to work fast, for Jesus had died about 3 pm, and Sabbath began at 6 pm.

Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, did not participate in its condemnation of Jesus. He "*was looking for the kingdom of God,*" and a disciple "*but secretly for fear of the Jews.*" Now Joseph boldly asks Pilate for permission to bury the body. Pilate allows it, to fault the Jews, because he knew Jesus was not guilty. Nicodemus assisted, also a well-educated, respected religious leader.

In John 3 he "*came to Jesus by night*" and defended Him in John 7. Jesus told him "*you must be born again from above by the Holy Spirit.*" Jesus was openly doing miracles, but Nicodemus inquired in private. Now when Jesus can speak no more, Nicodemus shows he has been converted, as he steps out of shadows into light. Like them, no longer trust ritual righteousness, but in Jesus' death to pay your sin.

2- Jesus was BURIED. Bones of executed criminals were taken to a burial site outside the city, or else left at "*Gehenna*" the city dump. But Pilate's permission let Jesus be buried in a tomb, with proper respect for human remains. Isaiah 53:9 was fulfilled, "*His grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was His tomb.*" Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloe spices, to place within the linen strips he and Joseph wrapped around the body. No fooling them. Jesus was a man, who was most assuredly dead.

A poor Joseph welcomed Jesus into this world. He received gold, frankincense and myrrh at His birth, riches for a moment. Though a builder by trade, He had no home and no tomb of His own. He lived in poverty and died in shame, naked on a criminal's cross. Yet, now a rich Joseph ministers at His death, giving his tomb to his Savior. Like them, you must be born again, die to self, and live for Jesus.

John says, "*In the place where He was crucified there was a garden.*" Coincidence? Remember, it was in a garden that sin entered the world, and the Savior promised to atone for it. "*And in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.*" This Joseph was the last to touch the Word made flesh. Another Joseph was first, who wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, in a stone manger in a cave stable under the shadow of King Herod. Now this Joseph wraps Him in linen cloths in his tomb, a rock-hewn cave, closed with a stone, the Governor's guard and seal. No question. Jesus was dead and buried and gone.

3- WHY does this dead Jesus matter to YOU? It's not the end of the story. It's not some far-away long-time-ago myth with no meaning for your life. Jesus was not just a man, but the Son of God, who died for sinners. YOU must account for His death. We can't know how much Joseph and Nicodemus understood about Christ, that day they removed the nails and buried His body. They had been under cover.

But Jesus said "*It is finished,*" paid in full, and they went public. Despising the shame, they willingly identified as Disciples of the Lamb. Their early weak faith gave way to strong love. When all seemed lost, a convenient moment to slink away, God intervened in their souls. Like them, YOU must declare Jesus as Lord. What circumstances will drive YOU to stand up and speak out for Christ?

Do you grasp the enormity of His sacrifice for sin? Your sin that nailed Him to the tree? Make TODAY the day you declare Jesus died for you and your sin. Proclaim that His death has no shame, but glory, for He purchased your freedom from sin. Believers do not fear the grave. "*It is finished.*" Believe, and be set free! Because, Jesus died and was buried. But, "*it's Friday - and Sunday's a-coming!*"