

Christ's Twofold Estate

Lesson 15: Christ's Burial, Jn 19.40-42

- I. The *need* for Christ's burial
 - A. It was necessary to establish the certainty of His death.
 1. The Jews believed that corruption began on the 4th day (Jn 11.39) but it was prophesied that the body of the Messiah would not see corruption (Ps 16.10) and so the body of our Lord lay in the tomb long enough to prove Him dead but not so long that corruption took hold of Him.
 - B. It was necessary to fulfill Old Testament types and prophecies, Jon 1.17; Mt 12.40; Isa 53.9; Ps 16.9-10; 18.4-5.
 - C. It was necessary for Christ to complete His humiliation, Mk 8.31; 9.31; 10.34; 14.8.
 1. His burial was the lowest step He could take in His abased estate. He came to the dust of the earth, taking in, before the eyes of men, the last breath of the curse of God against sin, Gen 3.19.
 - D. It was necessary for Christ to conquer death by entering fully into it, 1Cor 15.54-55.
 - E. It was necessary for Christ to conquer Satan and our deliverance from him, Heb 2.14-15.
- II. The *nature* of Christ's burial
 - A. Humiliation marked Christ's burial no less than it did His birth, life, and death. And yet, it was accompanied by several remarkable miracles.
 1. An extraordinary eclipse of the sun, Mt 27.45. The glory of all God's creation dare not shine when the glory of the Son of God was eclipsed by darkness. The sun's glory and light are a reflection of the glory and light of Christ, so that if Christ's own light is put out, then the sun must go dark. Nature knew better what took place on that day than either the Jews or the disciples themselves, cp. Isa 1.2.
 2. An earthquake, Mt 27.51. This was a sign of God's great indignation and wrath, Nah 1.6.
 3. The temple curtain was torn in two, Mt 27.51. This confirmed that the OT ceremonial types were fulfilled and abolished and that believers now had free and permanent access to God through Christ's atoning death, Heb 10.19-22.
 - a) Christ's death was the death of Judaism because it opened what was closed, finished what was started, fulfilled what was promised, revealed what was hidden, accomplished what was prefigured, and globalized what was localized, by granting access to God to every sinner who trusts in Christ's atoning sacrifice.
 - b) There was no more need for Aaron, because Melchizedek had appeared; no more need for the blood of lambs, because the blood of the Lamb of God had been shed; no more need for an ark and its mercy seat, because the Son of God had come in the flesh. To return to any part of the OT sacrificial system is to light a candle at noonday and to discredit the finished work of Christ.
 4. The tombs of many saints were opened, Mt 27.52-53. This showed that the purpose of Christ's descending into death was to raise His Church up with Himself, 1Cor 15.20.
 - B. Spurgeon: "These miracles wrought in connection with Christ's death were typical of the spiritual wonders that will be continued until He comes again: rocky hearts will be rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead and go into the Holy City, the New Jerusalem."
- III. Applications
 - A. See the depth of Christ's humiliation for us. Christ became not only *a poor man* for us, but also *a dead corpse* for us. Also, see the *beinousness* of sin that it deserves the *utmost* humiliation. And see how Christ, the eternal Son of God, was carried from Golgotha to the tomb and there lay

a captive to death. There's never been a greater abasement or humiliation in the world. What does this say about His great love for us?

- B. Christ's burial carries strong encouragement for believers against the fear of death.
1. If the grave could not destroy Christ, then it will not destroy us. "Death swallowed Him, but it could not digest Him." He both went into the grave and was raised up out of it as the Head of His Body, which means we'll know the same care in it as He did and the same deliverance out of it which He did, 1Cor 15.20; Acts 2.24.
 2. The union between the body of Christ and the divine nature was not dissolved in the grave. Therefore the union between Christ and us cannot be broken by death, WSC 37.
 3. Christ's body rested in the grave in hope of the Father's promise of resurrection (Ps 2.7; 16.10); and so in like manner we commit our bodies and the bodies of our believing loved ones to the grave in hope of the promise of resurrection, Pr 14.32; Phil 3.20-21; 1Th 4.13.
 4. Christ's lying in the grave completely altered the nature of it. It was a part of the curse, a prison to keep the dead bodies of sinners, Gen 3.19. But now, for believers, it's no longer a prison, but a bed of rest, Isa 57.2. "Therefore those who have one foot in heaven don't need to fear to put the other foot in the grave."
 5. For those outside of Christ, the grave is a terrible place. Death is God's police officer to arrest them and the grave is the prison to keep them until God calls them to His Bar. In the meantime death will reign over them in a foretaste of coming wrath. And when death is forced to deliver them up, they'll beg to lie forever in the tormenting grave rather than to appear before God in His anger.
 - a) But for the saints, the grave is a privileged place which smells of the spices with which our Lord was buried. When we awake out of it, we will be singing for the joy set before us and we will enter at last into the likeness of our resurrected Lord.
- C. If Christ is ours, we carry into the grave all the promises of God.
1. God's covenant holds firm during our time in the grave, Mt 22.32. We are as much the Lord's in the estate of death as we are in the estate of life. He is the God of our dust as much as of our soul.
 2. God's love for us is unchangeable. He looks down from heaven upon that pile of dust in the grave and says, "I am God of that body! (Rom 8.39)."
 3. God's providence will determine when our graves are to be prepared and won't dig them until we're fit to be put into them. He'll bring us to our graves at the best time and therefore we need not fear its hastening or arrival, Acts 13.36. Therefore let His timing comfort you.
 4. God's pardon has loosed all the bonds of our guilt from us and we won't die in our sins. "It's better to be cast alive into a den of snakes than dead into the bed of your sins," but the saints, whose sins are forgiven, have nothing to fear.
 5. Christ holds the keys to death (Rev 1.18), which means just as He's the One to unlock it to let us in, so He'll just as surely unlock it to let us out at the resurrection. So take heart and rest in His promise, not grieving for your loved ones who are still there, nor for yourself when you must join them, 1Cor 15.55-57.