

Series: Jesus, At Night #1675

Title: John 19.38-42

*Jesus Is Buried*

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We come today to the end of Christ's human life. When we last left off it is Friday, in the middle of the night, and our Lord has been betrayed and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. By way of summary, let me remind you of the events of the remainder of this night, leading into daylight on Friday morning and throughout that day. Following Christ's arrest He is taken and put on (quote/unquote) "trial" first by the Jews and then by the Romans. These are not legitimate, legal trials but rather hastily put together mock trials where the Lord is treated very, very unfairly. What happens to Him is *illegal* as Jewish law, in particular, makes abundantly clear. But the hound dogs of hate did not care. They've been pursuing His life – hell bent on killing Jesus – for a while, and now their time, under the providence of God, has come.

There are three sham trials before the Jewish religious leaders. And there are three sham trials before the Romans political rulers, Pilate and Herod (who send Christ back and forth between them). As this happens dawn and daylight come. The night is over, but this horrific day is only going to get worse. After being sentenced to death, Jesus endures torture by the Romans, He is marched through the streets and hauled to Golgotha where He is nailed to the cross. At about three in the afternoon the Lord gives up His own life and dies.

On the Passover, "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed (as 1 Corinthians 5.7 says)." Jesus, the Lamb of God, the sacrifice for our sins is dead. Let's pick up what happens next in John's Gospel, chapter 19, and verses 38-42. Join me in John 19, at verse 38. **"After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away [Christ's] body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."**

Does it amaze you, as it does me, that at the funeral of Jesus the Son of God, there are only two men? Here is Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. That's it. The disciples have fled and are nowhere to be found. Several of the women who love Jesus will watch to see where Joseph and Nicodemus put the Lord's body, but they did not participate in taking Him off the cross, pulling his hands back up through the nails and feet through the nail, binding the body in linen wrappings covered in the spices of myrrh and aloes, and taking Him into the garden tomb. While the One who has just paid for the sins of anyone who will *ever* follow Him is attended to by only two men, these are rich and influential guys.

We don't know much about Joseph. His name was common and we are told he was from Arimathea. We do not know of this location. Matthew says he was rich. Mark says he was a prominent member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. But he did not agree with them that Jesus should be crucified. Luke says that he was a good and righteous man, and Mark also says that he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Simply put, Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus. But John says he was "a secret one for fear of the Jews." Yet, following the Lord's death (confirmed by Pilate in Mark 15, verses 44 and 45), Joseph gathered up courage and asked Pilate for Christ's body. In Matthew we learn that the tomb in which they placed Jesus, this was Joseph's own tomb in which no other dead body had ever been laid.

And then here is Nicodemus. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin. And John reminds us Nicodemus "had first come to [Jesus] by night." That was back in John chapter 3. Somewhere along the way Nicodemus was saved and also kept this quiet, until he too saw His Lord's abandoned body, dead and hanging on the cross and so he defied the Sanhedrin and brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*" to anoint the Lord's corpse.

That would weigh about sixty-five pounds today, and both that amount and the type – myrrh and aloes – was commonly used to anoint the bodies of dead kings, and of course Jesus is *The King*. The Jews did not embalm or, like the Egyptians mummify, their dead so the spices were used to limit the stink of a decomposing corpse. This tips us off to the fact that neither of these men, nor the women who come to the tomb Sunday morning believed Christ will rise from the dead. If they did, why prepare His body for burial like this? They should have put him in the tomb and sat and waited for Jesus to come back to life and walk right out of that grave on the third day!

But lacking this faith, they hustled, because “of the Jewish day of preparation.” Sundown Friday night would mark the beginning of the Sabbath, so they had to get this done before then because work was forbidden on the Jewish Sabbath day. And they knew they could get the body to the tomb, because it was nearby. It is amazing, isn’t it, the providence of God, the sovereignty of Jesus even from His grave. The timing was perfect for Christ’s body to be in the tomb for three days, because the Lord said this back in Matthew 12, verse 40, **“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”**

Joseph and Nicodemus are fulfilling prophecy. And sure enough, as Jews counted any part of a day as a day, the Lord’s body was in that tomb part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday morning! That’s three days and three nights.

Even at the funeral of a person known to be a fervent sinner there are most often more than two people who come to mourn and to say just the most wonderful things about the dead man or woman lying in the coffin before them. Probably like you, I have attended funerals where Christ was not honored, even if He was barely mentioned. The dead person was not a Christian. The family are not believers. But the place is packed. I mean it would be rare to find a wake or a funeral today that only has two mourners in attendance. And yet, Jesus is taken down from the cross, bound in linen wrappings with spices, and placed in a tomb by just two men. That’s it.

And there, His body is laid. Having performed this act of love, having emerged from secrecy to publicly declare their faith in the Son of God, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus walk away. It is night time now. I wonder what they said to one another? And I think about the thoughts and the feelings all of the people who followed Christ, and loved and served Him, His disciples and apostles must have had on Friday night and all day on the Sabbath Saturday. Sadness. Fear. Disappointment. Discouragement. Maybe in denial that the Lord was really gone? These burial texts in the Gospels always seem like the whole narrative comes to one big *thud* here.

During the overnight, when all was finally quiet and dark, in the stillness of the night did they recount Christ’s life and ministry? Lying there, wide awake, because they could not sleep, surely they did. Surely they remembered what He said and did in the mornings, at midday, in the afternoons and in the evenings. Jesus, at night.

Let’s pray. Father, thank You for the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for sovereignly and providentially providing Your One and Only Son to come into this world, to take on flesh, and to live as the God-Man before us. Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God, thank You from the bottom of our hearts for Your sacrifice on our behalf. We love You because You first loved us, and chose us, and called us to be Your disciples. Holy Spirit, thank You for living in us and for teaching us the truth of the Word of God. Thank You for illuminating for our eyes and ears to see and hear what You have had for us in this series, Jesus at night.

For those of us who struggle, particularly at night and throughout the overnight, I pray. Teach us to remember that You are always alive and awake and we can come to You and pray and You will be an ever present help to us in time of need. So, for all of these my friends, who need You I ask that You please be near and close to them. And for all those who have yet to believe in You, Lord Christ, we pray. Please save them from their sin, as You have saved us from ours. Our parents and grandparents, our brothers and sisters, and cousins and aunts and uncles. Our children and nieces and nephews. Our friends. Our colleagues. Our enemies. Strangers. Renew Your church and revive your world with the gospel, preached, received, and believed. We pray all this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Jesus is in that tomb, but He won't be there long. Next time we discover that Christ the Lord is Risen, Indeed! We'll meet Jesus, *in the morning!*

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