

# They Laid Him in a Rock-Hewn Tomb

Alternate reading: [Luke 24:1-12](#)

GOSPEL READING: Luke 23:50-56

50 Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, 51 who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid. 54 It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. 55 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; 56 then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Meditation: Jesus not only died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3); he also, by the grace of God, tasted death for every one (Hebrews 2:9). It was a real death that put an end to his earthly human existence. Jesus died in mid afternoon and the Sabbath began at 6:00 pm. Since the Jewish law permitted no work on the Sabbath, the body had to be buried quickly. Someone brave enough would have to get permission from the Roman authorities to take the body and bury it. The bodies of executed criminals were usually left unburied as carrion (dead flesh) for the vultures and dogs. Jesus was spared this indignity through the gracious intervention of Joseph of Arimathea.

*Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be buried in a rich man's tomb - but no tomb could contain him for long*

Who was this admirer and secret disciple of Jesus? Luke tells us that Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council that condemned Jesus. We are told that he did not agree with their verdict. He was either absent from their meeting or silent when they tried Jesus. What kind of man was Joseph? Luke tells us that he was "good and righteous" and "looking for the kingdom of God". Although he did not stand up for Jesus at his trial, he nonetheless, sought to honour him in his death by giving him a proper burial. This was to fulfill what the prophet Isaiah had foretold: *"He was cut off out of the land of the living ..and they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth"* (Isaiah 53:8-9).

*The power of God kept Jesus' body from corruption so he could rise victorious on the third day*

In the Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus speaks: *"Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one: I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades"* (Revelation 1:17-18). No tomb in the world could contain the Lord Jesus for long. His death on the cross purchased our redemption and his triumph over the grave on Easter morning defeated death. What preserved the Lord Jesus from corruption? He was kept from decay and he rose from the dead by divine power. *"My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not let your Holy One see corruption"* (Psalm 16:9-10). The mystery of Christ's lying in the tomb on the sabbath reveals the great sabbath rest of God after the fulfillment of our salvation which brings peace to the whole world (Colossians 1:18-20). Is your hope in this life only, or is it well founded in the resurrection of Christ and his promise that those who believe in him will live forever?

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *The victory of the Lamb of God*, sermon by Melito of Sardis, died 180 A.D.

When the Lord had clothed himself with humanity, and had suffered for the sake of the sufferer, and had been bound for the sake of the imprisoned, and had been judged for the sake of the condemned, and buried for the sake of the one who was buried, he rose from the dead, and cried aloud with this voice: "Who is the one who contends with me? Let him stand in opposition to me. I have set the condemned man free; I have given the dead man life; I have raised up the one who had been entombed. Who is my opponent? 'I', he says, 'am the Christ'. I am the one who destroyed death, and triumphed over the enemy, and trampled Hades under foot, and bound the strong one, and carried off man to the heights of heaven'. 'I', he says, 'am the Christ'.

"Therefore, come, all families of men, you who have been befouled with sins, and receive forgiveness for your sins. I am your forgiveness. I am the Passover of your salvation, I am your light, I am your savior, I am your resurrection, I am your king. I am leading you up to the heights of heaven, I will show you the eternal Father, I will raise you up by my right hand".

This is the one who made the heaven and the earth, and who in the beginning created man, who was proclaimed through the law and the prophets, who became human through the virgin, who was hanged upon a tree, who was buried in the earth, who was resurrected to the heights of heaven, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who has authority to judge and to save everything, from the beginning of the world to the end of the age.

This is the alpha and the omega, this is the beginning and the end - an indescribable beginning, and an incomprehensible end. This is the Christ. This is the king. This is Jesus. This is the general. This is the Lord. This is the one who sits at the right hand of the Father, to whom be the glory and the power for ever. Amen.

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**OPENING PRAYER: - Lord Jesus, you died that I might live forever in your kingdom of peace and righteousness. Strengthen my faith that I may I know the power of your resurrection and live in the hope of seeing you face to face for ever. Amen.**

**CLOSING PRAYER: - Lord Jesus, you have triumphed over the grave, and you have won new life for us. Give me the eyes of faith to see you in your glory. Help me to draw near to you and to grow in the knowledge of your great love and power. Amen.**