

The Gospel of Jesus Christ: Part Two

The Burial

Read Matthew 27:51-61

INTRODUCTION

In these verses, we study the second of three key truths that Paul said were the things of first importance to the Christian. In our last message, we looked at the death of Christ. In this message, we will be looking at the burial of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Please turn with me to I Corinthians 15:3-4

The burial is the second of those three key truths every Christian needs to believe, affirm, and tell others about. In *I Corinthians 15:3-4*, Paul says, “*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*”

So now at this point, we are moving into the final three-hour period on this day of Passover. The events leading to Jesus' burial – the next essential thing Paul spoke of.

At sundown, approximately 6 pm, the Passover day ends, and a Sabbath day begins. Passover is always followed by a week-long feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

According to Exodus 12:16, the first and last days of this feast are to be Sabbath days regardless of which day they fall, **Exodus 12:16** says, “*And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.*”

The Jews called these special Sabbath days, High Sabbaths, to distinguish them from the usual weekly Sabbath that came every Friday evening. They also called the day before any Sabbath a day of preparation because certain preparations had to be made for a Sabbath. Since work could not be done on a Sabbath day, Jews spent the day before completing essential chores.

They lit fires, drew water, and prepared food so they could rest on the Sabbath day. If someone died, they rushed to bury the person so their body did not remain unburied over the Sabbath day, that would be a very disgraceful thing if that ever happened.

Please turn with me to John 19:31

I want you to notice and understand the great urgency behind the burial of Jesus. They have three hours to get custody of the body, prepare the body for burial, find a tomb, and then bury Him properly.

John records that the Passover day was a day of preparation because the next day would be a High Sabbath day. **John 19:31** says, *“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”*

So, this year, Passover fell on a Thursday so that meant there would be not one but *two* Sabbath days in a row. First, the High Sabbath on Friday, which started at 6 pm the evening before, followed by the usual weekly Sabbath on Saturday. Therefore, if Jesus’ body were not buried before sundown, He would remain unburied for two days...a great dishonor!

So, the next three hours will be a scramble to get Jesus’ body in a tomb, and that period begins with a series of supernatural signs.

This brings us to our first point...

TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD

Look at Matthew 27:51-54 *“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept*

arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."

Notice these supernatural signs that followed Jesus' death which showed *"Truly this was the Son of God."* These verses tell us the veil in the temple was torn in two, dead bodies were resurrected out of tombs and a great earthquake shook the ground.

First, Let's Look at the Earthquake

As Jesus died, God shook the earth resulting in rocks breaking and structures falling down scaring everyone who experienced it. As we mentioned last week these earthquakes were felt as far away as Turkey, and possibly much farther.

God commonly used earthquakes to announce especially important events to His creation, and what more important event could happen, than the death of His Son for the sins of men?

So, God announces the death of the Messiah with an earthquake. Earthquakes are awesome displays of God's power. The Messiah dying was also an awesome display of the power of God to redeem mankind from sin and death.

Turn with me to Isaiah 53:5-9 & Ephesians 1:4-9

Think about this, Jesus' dying was not God's plan failing or God being powerless to save His Son – Jesus' dying was exactly as God had planned.

Look at **Ephesians 1:4-9** “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*”

Now, Notice the Reaction to the Earthquake

Matthew 27:54 again, “*Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*”

Let's remember the setting, the world had just experienced three solid hours of unexplainable darkness, then suddenly the sun begins to shine again at exactly the moment that Jesus says, “*It is finished*” (**John 19:30**).

Then Jesus gives up His spirit, voluntarily lays down His life, choosing the precise moment of His death, and then the earth shakes with a massive earthquake.

These men put two and two together, they connected these obvious dots, and quickly concluded that *“Truly this was the Son of God.”* Albert Barnes wrote this about the centurion in His commentary:

*“They had heard, probably, that before Pilate he professed to be the Son of God. Seeing these wonders, they believed that he was true, and that God was now attesting the truth of his professions. The centurion was a heathen, and had probably no very distinct notions of the phrase the Son of God; perhaps understanding by it only that he was like the heathen heroes who had been deified; but he certainly regarded these wonders as proof that he was what he professed to be.”*¹

The Roman centurion recognized the deity of Christ. He recognized Jesus as the Son of God – and the Jewish authorities and most of Israel did not. **Matthew 27:54** again, *“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”*

This verse teaches us an important truth - that even those who may seem unreachable or unlikely to believe in Jesus can be touched by His power and truth. The centurion, a Roman soldier who would have been considered an outsider by the Jewish religious leaders of the time, was able to recognize and confess Jesus as the Son of God.

¹ (Barnes, 1962)

On the other hand, the religious leaders who were supposed to be the ones leading the people to the truth were blind to who Jesus truly was. They ignored His teachings, twisted His words, and ultimately crucified Him, showing their disbelief and rejection of Him.

This serves as a reminder to us that God can work in the hearts of anyone, regardless of their background or beliefs. God can use anyone to do anything for Him! So, we should never write off someone as being beyond reach or too far gone to accept Jesus or for Jesus to use in any way He so chooses to use them.

Next, let's look at the...

Resurrection of Saints

These saints, these believers were resurrected from their tombs. Please notice how carefully Matthew says this happened...in the beginning of verse 52 Matthew says first the tombs were opened, “*And the graves were opened...*” (v.52).

As Jesus died, many of these tombs were opened, which means the stones sealing the entrance were miraculously moved out of place. God opened the graves of many dead believers the moment Jesus died, but this event was just a prelude to the real miracle.

In the second half of verse 52, Matthew says many saints were resurrected, meaning their dead bodies returned to life, “*and many bodies of the saints which slept arose*” (v.52). Notice, not just a few, but many were resurrected.

But we need to notice a very important detail that Matthew gives us in verse 53, I don't think we catch this detail like we should, look at verse 53 again, "*And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*"

Notice that phrase in the middle of the verse, "*after his resurrection.*" Their tombs were opened at the moment of His death, but they did not come out of their graves until "*after His resurrection.*" Jesus was resurrected first, then they were. ***I Corinthians 15:20*** "*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*"

I Think What We Have Here In Verse 53 is s an Illustration

Look at verse 53 again, "*And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*"

Look at the odd way in which these resurrections took place – first, the tombs opened, and then after three days plus the bodies walked out – I believe this can be considered an illustration of the Gospel itself.

As Christ died, He paid the price for sin, declaring emphatically, "*It is finished!*" Jesus' atoning work on the cross opened our tombs, so to speak, making a way for everyone to escape the penalty of death.

The stone blocking our way of escape from the tomb of death was rolled away, the seal broken, and the way out

prepared. But before we can leave our sentence of death, we must first accept the truth of Jesus's resurrection. As Paul said plainly in **Romans 10:9** *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

To be saved, to walk away from your death sentence – you must first believe that Jesus shed His blood and died for you, in your place, and that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

You need faith in His sin-forgiving death before you can experience your own spiritual resurrection. You need faith in His death, burial, and resurrection so that you can escape the death sentence you are already under because of your sin.

As Paul told us...the thing of first importance is to know that Jesus died, He was buried, and He was resurrected (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Speaking of resurrection, these saints were resurrected like the way Lazarus was raised in Bethany during the week before Passover.

Lazarus was not resurrected into a new eternal, sinless body. That is the same situation for these saints as well...they are being resurrected into their old bodies as a sign or testimony.

Those who knew these saints before they died would recognize them and seeing them alive would be an

undeniable miracle. But in time those resurrected saints died again, and they now wait for a future day to be resurrected for life in the Kingdom.

The Veil Was Torn in Two

Look at **Matthew 27:51** again, “*And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.*”

So, there was an earthquake; there were multiple resurrections – to announce the Messiah’s death - and what we have not talked about yet, we see in verse 51 that the Temple veil was torn in two, “*And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*”

This sign is probably the most important of all the signs on that day. To understand this sign properly, though, we need to start with some background on the Temple and veil itself.

Remember the temple was modeled after the Tabernacle which came before it, though the current temple was much larger and ornate than the Tabernacle. Both structures were divided into three sections or areas.

The first area was an outside courtyard created by a fence or wall that encompassed the tabernacle or temple building proper. Then the building was further divided into two sections. The larger of these was called the Holy Place and the smaller inner section was called the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. These two sections were also

sometimes called the outer sanctuary and the inner sanctuary.

The Holy Place or outer sanctuary held furniture like the lamp, the table with the showbread, and the incense altar. This space was only accessible by the priesthood of Israel, who entered this place daily as part of their service in the temple. They burned incense and applied the blood of daily sacrifices to the altar of incense, kept the lamp lit, and set out the bread.

The third section of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, the Most Holy Place, or the inner sanctuary, was divided from the Holy Place by a curtain called the veil. Behind this veil sat the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat, upon which the glory of God dwelled perpetually.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, reports that in Jesus's day, this space, the Holy of Holies, was completely empty, since the Ark of the Covenant had disappeared during the Babylonian invasion.

Nevertheless, the Holy of Holies remained a protected space reserved for the presence of God and inaccessible behind a large and very thick veil.

The only exception was on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest of Israel entered to make atonement for the nation. Apart from that one day a year, the Most Holy Place remained off-limits to all.

Now let's look at...

The Incredible Significance of the Torn Veil

The rending of the veil in the temple was even more spectacular than the terrible darkness that had covered all the land a little while before. Without the veil, the Jews could not worship as they had always worshipped.

The veil separated men from the holy of holies, the now symbolic place of the mercy seat which was the only meeting place between man and God. Only the high priest could enter there, and even he could enter only once a year.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the holy of holies to offer blood -first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. Any other person who ventured behind the veil met sudden death. The fact that the rending of the veil was from top to bottom plainly showed that it was done by the hand of God and not by men.

Historians tell us the veil in the temple was handwoven of pure linen between 1 to 3 inches thick. We are also told that before the veil was hung, a yoke of oxen was hooked to each corner of the veil and then forced to pull with all their might in each direction until the oxen were exhausted.

The veil was then suspended before strong sunlight, and if no ray of light could penetrate the veil, it was at this point that it was finally approved to be placed in the temple.

So, we see only the power of Almighty God could have accomplished rending the veil “*in twain from the top to the bottom.*” This rending is even more significant in that it took place at the very moment Jesus died.

Turn with me to Hebrews 10:19-22

Without the temple, the Jews could not worship; and without the temple veil to cover the Holy of Holies, the priests could not offer sacrifices for sin. Without the veil, there could be no forgiveness.

Thus, the Holy of Holies was laid bare, and the way was opened for every man to enter into the holiest place and come to the mercy seat, the dwelling place of God. With the rending of the veil, Judaism must come to an end. With the rending of the veil, access was opened to God for all.

Hebrews 10:19-22 explains, "*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*"

Notice the writer of Hebrews explains to us that the veil in the temple was a type of the flesh (the humanity) of the Lord Jesus Christ, "*By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*" (v.20). The veil in the temple was a type of the humanity of Christ.

Symbolically, God dwelt behind the veil, and into God's presence, no ordinary person could enter without the rending of the veil, or the rending of the flesh of Christ. To get access to God you had to go through Christ, you had to go through the veil which was a type of Christ.

So, notice this - even with the veil, God was teaching the Jews that without the rending of the veil, without the sacrifice of Christ, no one could approach God, and with the sacrifice of Christ the Holy of Holies was opened, and all men became privileged to enter into the presence of God by the precious death and shed blood of the Lamb of God.

Jesus with His death opened the way to God to all mankind.

Now to our next point...

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

Time is running out to get Jesus' body in the tomb before sundown on the Passover. At 6 PM a new day begins in Jewish reckoning, the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread. The first and last days of Unleavened Bread are always High Sabbaths and since Passover fell on a Thursday this year, the High Sabbath was followed by the weekly Sabbath in that year.

That meant there would be two Sabbaths back-to-back which made it all the more important to get Jesus buried. Once that double Sabbath began, all work ceased until Sunday, including the work of preparing a body for burial.

Jesus' friends could not bear the thought of leaving His body hanging exposed on the cross for two days. As a result, they are searching desperately for a way to get Jesus off the cross, to prepare His body and bury it before

sundown. Time is of the essence. The clock is ticking. Time is fast running out to get His body buried.

Even the chance to bury Jesus before the end of the day was unusual since most victims of crucifixion survived a day or longer, but remember Jesus laid down His life. He picked the time of His death. The crucifixion did not kill Him, He voluntarily laid down His life.

When Jesus died at 3 PM by giving up His spirit, it meant a Passover burial was possible...and it fulfilled Scripture. In Exodus 34, God told Israel that nothing of the Lamb could remain at the end of the Passover feast. The lamb was to be fully consumed by the family or else burned so that as Passover ended, nothing of the lamb was left.

That requirement pictured the body of Christ, the Lamb of God, buried out of sight before the end of Passover. Everything in the Bible, every detail, every nugget is so incredible, it all points to Christ.

Jesus died early enough on Passover to give opportunity for His disciples to arrange His burial before the start of the Sabbath, but they had no time to waste. They would have to hurry and there were several hurdles standing in their way.

First, there were very few disciples available to do the work and they were all women for the most part. Remember Jesus had been all but deserted by His disciples to hang on the cross without most of them around to support Him.

Matthew 27:55-56 says, “*And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*”

Matthew and the other Gospels report that as Jesus died, a few women looked on from a distance. Specifically, three “Mary’s”: Mary Magdalene, Jesus’ mother Mary, and Mary, the mother of the apostles James and John.

So, it was the absence of men that stood in the way of burying Jesus before 6 PM. These few women did not have the physical strength to remove nails from the cross and lower a body by themselves.

If Jesus is to be buried before sundown, it will require at least one or two men to step forward and step up to offer assistance.

Secondly, the Romans had to permit family members to bury a crucified prisoner, and that permission was not usually easy to obtain. Romans preferred to let crucified prisoners rot on the cross for days or weeks because it reinforced the deterrent effect.

To get Jesus' body immediately down and off the cross would take someone with political clout to convince Pilate to release the body that day.

Finally, someone needed to secure a nearby place to bury Jesus, and that was probably the hardest problem to solve with less than three hours to accomplish all this.

Grave sites were owned by families, but an itinerant person like Jesus would have had no family burial site in Jerusalem. Someone with means would need to arrange for the purchase of a tomb, which would be impossible to do in such a short time.

Each of these barriers was incredibly significant but taken together they made the task of burying Jesus before 6 PM a basic impossibility – but still these ladies were determined to take care of their Lord and see that He received the best burial possible in the three hours they had.

To me this scenario needed those ladies driving this to get done. Men, thinking logically, would surmise, this is just not possible, but the ladies, thinking more emotionally, would say this is going to get done, and we don't care what must happen, Jesus' body will be buried in less than three hours.

But of course, we also know that God was going to make sure His Son was placed in a tomb before sundown as planned. So as minutes tick away and the situation grows ever more desperate for these women, a man finally steps up and steps forward.

Which brings us to...

THE FINAL HOUR

Matthew 27:57-61 “*When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the*

body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.”

In verse 57 Matthew says, “*when even was come.*” This refers to the final hour of daylight. Were down to the final hour to get Jesus’s body in the tomb, and not hang out in public on the cross for two days. Time is down to the wire now. The start of the Sabbath is fast approaching.

Jesus’ body was still hanging on the cross, and the women were likely pleading for anyone to help them get Him down. It took these ladies, and their emotions, and their emotional thinking, to get this done. God really used these ladies that day to make sure this practically impossible thing was done.

There had to have been some believing men in the vicinity who heard their pleas but hesitated to respond or logically dismissed the possibility of getting Jesus buried in time. Also, if someone stepped forward, they would be exposed as a Jesus-sympathizer which was a great risk to their safety.

There was real reason to fear what the Jewish leaders would do to such a person. Being known as a disciple of Jesus could result in persecution. A man’s family could be

ostracized from Jewish society...he could lose everything: his livelihood, his home, his life.

This makes what happens next all the more remarkable...a rich man of great power and with much to lose steps forward to assist the women.

The man is Joseph from Arimathea. The other Gospel writers tell us that Joseph was a Pharisee and a member of the ruling Sanhedrin Counsel and that he, along with fellow Pharisee Nicodemus, were secret disciples of Jesus in the Sanhedrin.

Over the past couple of years, these men followed Jesus from a distance while remaining loyal Pharisees serving on the council. Perhaps they told themselves they could do more good for Jesus in their behind-the-scenes role than if they came out publicly.

If so, then they were trying to have their cake and eat it too...they tried to retain their positions of power and authority in this life... while at the same time, being devoted to their Messiah and expecting Him to receive them warmly in the Kingdom.

But Jesus told His disciples that they could not have it all...we cannot seek unity with this world while also preparing for the next.

Mark 8:34-35 says, *“And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save*

his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."

It Is Either/Or

Jesus always describes discipleship in this way, as an "either/or" proposition.

- Either we follow Jesus, or we chase after the world.
- Either we seek to please Jesus, or we seek the approval of men.
- Either we serve God, or we serve wealth...you cannot serve both.

Joseph and Nicodemus were good men – righteous men even – but until this moment, they were trying to have both. They wanted to remain on the Sanhedrin Counsel and with the approval of the other Pharisees and Sadducees...At the same time, they wanted credit for following a Messiah that the rest of the Counsel despised and wanted to kill. But there was literally no way they could have both...one allegiance would always win out over the other.

This is the challenge facing every disciple of Jesus...we are called out of the world by our faith, and yet we remain in the world for a time. Jesus said we must be willing to "lose" this world so we can serve the interests of the next, and that means making different decisions, living differently, and having kingdom priorities, not worldly priorities, it means putting Christ first, His Word and His

local Church first, over the priorities of the world and entertainment and rest.

Following Jesus may mean losing a few friends, losing promotions, or your job...it may even mean losing your life. That is the dilemma Jesus places in front of *all* His disciples...which is why Jesus asked us to count the cost of following Him.

Matthew tells us Joseph was a rich man, so we would understand the great sacrifice he was making by stepping forward. He would likely lose his position on the council, his place in society, the respect of his peers, and his means of support.

So, Joseph does, finally publicly side with Jesus, and as He does, he fulfills Scripture. Isaiah 53:9 says the Messiah dies among criminals and He is buried in a rich man's tomb.

So, it was...

TIME TO COUNT THE COST

Now as Joseph and Nicodemus heard the pleas of the women, they recognized it was time to count the cost and to stand in the gap. ***Ezekiel 22:30*** says, “*And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.*”

So, in verse 58 Joseph steps forward and begins to solve the three challenges to burying Jesus before sundown, “*He*

went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.”

Given how much the council fought with Pilate to crucify Jesus, Pilate would not have been inclined to release Jesus so easily. He was probably concerned that the Sanhedrin would return to him complaining that Jesus had been let go too easily.

So, it is likely that the only person who could convince Pilate to release Jesus would be a member of the Sanhedrin Council like Joseph. So, because a member of the Sanhedrin requested Jesus’ body, Pilate was willing to release Jesus for burial.

In verse 59, Joseph returns to the cross, and with Nicodemus’ help they remove Jesus’ body from the cross, *“And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.”*

Then with the women’s help, the main drivers of all this, the main reasons, humanly speaking, that Jesus was buried before the Sabbath, with the women’s help the men prepare the body for burial, wrapping it quickly with linen but without embalming spices.

Normally a body was prepared with embalming spices that helped dry the body over time. But with time running out and with no chance to buy the necessary spices, they are forced to use linen only.

This was to be a temporary concession on their part. The women were planning to return to the tomb on Sunday

morning after the full completion of the double Sabbath and with sunlight to assist them in applying the spices. They could have come on Saturday at 6 pm, but they would have had no sunlight to see to their task. Again, we see God's providential hand in every detail, every aspect of this.

So, with Joseph's help, they claimed Jesus' body and removed Him from the cross, which leaves only the final challenge of where to bury Him. Remember at this time, they only have about an hour left, so they accomplish all this in less than an hour, which is quite remarkable.

Joseph, being wealthy, had recently completed construction on a tomb in a quarry close to the city. Carving a new cave out of rock was a labor-intensive business, so this cave would have been quite expensive to build. Some estimate it might have cost Joseph as much as \$40,000 in today's money.

But with time running out and no other options, Joseph gives up his tomb so that Jesus could have a proper burial that day. Joseph stepped out of the shadows, exposing himself publicly as a follower of Jesus, and made a significant sacrifice in the process.

He most likely sacrificed his career, friends, and perhaps his security as well. To say nothing of the sacrifice of \$40,000 in the form of that tomb. He traded things of this life for the rewards of the next just as Jesus said.

But notice what he gained...first, by his faith in Jesus, Joseph traded death for life.

- Jesus took the penalty for Joseph's sin, dying in his place, which is beautifully pictured by Jesus taking Joseph's place in the tomb.
- What's more, Joseph's name is recorded in Scripture for all eternity, forever after known as the man who buried Jesus.
- Finally, and this is so cool, if I can use that word to describe this, Joseph even got his tomb back, because as it turned out Jesus only needed to borrow it for three days.

That is the power of obedience...serve Jesus sacrificially become a part of His story and be blessed in the end.

We may not see our names in Scripture, but we will see ourselves making an impact for the Kingdom. The things you do to serve Jesus will never be forgotten, and in the Kingdom, they will become crowns of glory.

Then notice in verse 61, Matthew once again mentions the women looking on as Jesus is buried, "*And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.*"

These precious ladies, the drivers of this whole burial narrative still there to the very end, Mary making sure her Son got a proper respectful burial, would not stop pleading and prodding till it was done, the other Mary's helping and pleading and prodding along with her to get Jesus' body off the cross and respectably buried.

Matthew is also showing us how these women are acting as a chain of custody to authenticate the story of Jesus' resurrection. This next part is so cool, so incredible. We are almost done, but please pay attention to this last part of the message.

CONCLUSION

In investigative work, it is important to maintain a chain of custody for all evidence, so that no one can question its authenticity. From the moment a piece of evidence is collected, the police must be able to prove how that evidence was handled. That chain of custody assures that the evidence is trustworthy.

Without these women present, Jesus had no witnesses to testify concerning the most important moments of His ministry. Remember, Paul called those three things – the death, the burial, and the resurrection – of first importance for the Church.

So, we are thankful these women were courageous enough to remain with Jesus after the men had run away. And because they did, they served as a chain of custody for Jesus' body and more to follow.

These women were present from the moment Jesus died on the cross until the tomb was sealed. They never left His side.

As we will see in our next message, they will be the first to visit the tomb on Sunday morning to find it empty. They could testify that Jesus did, in fact, die, did, in fact, spend

three days in a tomb, and did, in fact, resurrect Himself on the third day.

They could certify the absolute authenticity and 100% accuracy of Paul's statement in ***I Corinthians 15:3-4*** "*Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*"

We have looked at the death of Jesus, we have looked at the incredible and miraculous burial of Jesus, and next week on Easter morning we will look at the resurrection of Jesus. But before we go let me ask you a few questions:

- (1) Have you counted the cost of your service to Christ? Is He first in your life? Is your relationship with Him first in your life? Is His local church, attendance to that local church, and support of that local church a top priority in your life?
- (2) Have you started a relationship with Him? Is He your Savior? Is He your Lord? If not, what would stop you from turning from your sin, repenting of your sin, and turning to Him by faith right now?
- (3) How is your personal relationship with Jesus? Do you live for Him as you should? Do you serve Him as you should? Is there anything between you and the Lord? Is there something you need to confess, and forsake and repent of this morning?