

STORY

The Death and Burial of Jesus - (Matthew 13, Mark 14, Luke 23, John 19)

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help me to bring into focus for these children the wonderful, self-sacrificing attitude You had even as You died on the cross, and please send Your Spirit to capture their hearts with Your love for them. Amen.

OUTER AIM

Jesus suffered, died, and was buried.

INNER AIM

God's plan for our redemption required that One Substitute must die for the sins of the world, and we are happy that Jesus died for us.

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol.2, pp. 412-422)

Just a quick review of a couple of minutes at Calvary as we hear Jesus say goodbye to his mother.

His foster-father Joseph was no longer alive; Jesus' younger brothers and sisters (Mt.13:55) were not yet converted to His fellowship (Jn.7:5), so Jesus provided Mary with the support of a Christian son (John); His younger siblings became members of the Christian Church sometime later(Acts 1:14).

John was happy to become her adopted son.

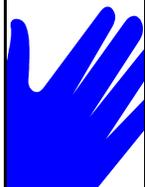
Application: This is a practical example of spiritual (church) fellowship applied in real life by Jesus Himself! St. Paul did not invent the doctrine of church fellowship, for Jesus already here was practicing it in a most personal way. We are closer to Jesus than His blood relatives were, as He Himself claims in Mt. 12:46-50. What an honor for us!!

At the scene of Jesus on the cross, from about noon until 3:00 pm, Jewish Standard time:

Luke 23:44-45 tells us that there was darkness at midday over all the earth, for the sun was darkened (obscured) as in a total solar eclipse, yet this was not the moon obscuring the sun, because Passover was always at full moon, when the moon and sun are on opposite sides of our planet. This miracle was recorded even by heathen writers, for it darkened the whole hemi-sphere of the planet facing the sun for three hours. Comment: Perhaps this miraculous darkness was a byproduct of the struggle of Jesus against the "Prince of darkness," who was doing his infernal worst to penetrate Jesus' self-sacrificing attitude of love for us. The light of heaven was denied Jesus, as it would be denied to us if He had not endured this brush with hell.

Mt.27:46

- ▶ "And about the ninth hour (with no sun shining, it would have been difficult to be very precise about "clock" time), Jesus cried out with a loud voice..."
- ▶ Even after three hours of losing blood and his cardio-vascular system going into shock, He summoned enough energy to call out with a LOUD voice "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" In Hebrew/Aramaic *El* is the form of direct address for *God*, and the *i* suffix means *my*, as Jesus spoke the words of Ps. 22:1 when He felt the pain of being abandoned by His own Father in heaven.
- ▶ We will never plumb the depth of what Jesus felt, but we may ponder: "Why..."-- (What have I done to deserve this treatment?) have You -- (You, the eternal Creator and Architect of the plan of salvation, the merciful God who does not desire the death of even the wicked) forsaken--(abandoned, cut off from all rescue or desire to salvage) Me?"-- (the one Person



who has done nothing to deserve being cast overboard like this, the only totally flawless, blameless human who has ever lived.)

Matt 27:47

- ▶ "Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said: 'This man is calling for Elijah.'" These Scripturally illiterate bystanders did not recognize Ps.22:1 and perhaps mistook *Eli* as a shortened form of *Elijah*.

John 19:28

- ▶ "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: 'I thirst.'" Again Psalm 22 came to Jesus' mind as it befit His agony of thirst (due to the parching effect of raging fever and heavy panting in pain).
- ▶ We most note that "knowing that all things were now accomplished" carries a depth of meaning: by the Spirit John reports that Jesus had arrived at the conviction that His sufferings had accomplished their purpose, for He had gone through the torments of hell, and nothing was left undone that He had been commissioned to do as the Lamb of God for sinners slain. The life He had lived in perfect loving obedience and self-sacrifice could now come to a successful close.

John 19:30 and Luke 23:46 tell us that when He had received the sour wine, He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (cf. Ps.31:5); He then breathed His last and gave up His spirit. These are the sixth and seventh "words" from the cross, and both of them came during His last conscious moments.

"It is finished" means more than "I am a goner," for it is a loud echo of "all things are now accomplished.." In spiritual content, everything that had ever gone wrong and needed righting in the court of divine justice had been taken care of and properly completed; the obstacle of sin, sins, and sinfulness was successfully removed to the last iota in that moment of His death. The head of Satan had been crushed, and Paradise opened for all mortals. The loudness of His vigorous announcement should ring from every Christian pulpit and echo in every sinner's heart, as Paul expresses: "But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (I Cor.15:57).

When His spirit (soul, "ghost") left His earthly body, the God-man really died. He entrusted His eternal future into the loving care of His Father, and OUR Father. Hallelujah!

Mt. 27:51

- ▶ "And behold, (the Spirit expressly points these out as deserving our attention, due to their import) "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."
- ▶ This three-inch thick, 60' tall by 30' wide room divider between the Sanctuary and the Most Private Sanctuary normally protected the privacy of God's Ark of the Covenant from any intrusion, symbolizing God's unapproachable presence. The only exception was that once a year on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) the High Priest was authorized to come in with sacrificial blood to sprinkle on the "Mercy Seat" (place of mercy) for atonement of sins.
- ▶ Since Jesus "by His own blood entered in once [and that was enough!] into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12), the obstructive curtain had no further function; the Old had been superseded by the New!
- ▶ --"and the earth quaked and the rocks were split" in testimony that a corner of history had been turned; a new Era had been opened by God's almighty hand.
- ▶ "...and the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to

many."

- ▶ First of all, we remember that these were not underground graves, but grottos in hillsides; in these little caverns our brothers and sisters came alive, and on Easter morning they got out to return to their old neighborhoods and their families to prove that the Resurrection was no theory!
- ▶ Thus God added a few more instruments of orchestral accompaniment to the grand symphony of victory over death and the grave--in resurrecting some Christian folks who knew from personal experience that Jesus was indeed Savior and LORD.

Mt. 27:54

- ▶ The earthquake and its impact on the cemetery scared these tough soldiers, for they made the correct connection between Jesus and God, recognizing that His death had disturbed the universe. Luke comments that the centurion "glorified God" by his recognition that Jesus was a righteous man.
- ▶ Perhaps we shall see this man in heaven, a firstfruit of Jesus' promise: "If I be lifted up from the earth [upon the cross], I will draw all persons unto Me" (Jn.12:32).

Luke 23:48

- ▶ "And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned."
- ▶ Perhaps they felt as did the Publican of Luke 18, sorry for their cruelty and repentant of their guilt in participating in Jesus' crucifixion.

v.49:

- ▶ "But all His acquaintances, and the women (among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedees' sons--Mt.27:56) who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things."

The coup de grace: John 19: 31-37

Saturday, the Sabbath, was only a couple of hours away, since it started at sundown. Mosaic Law required that a corpse not be left exposed overnight (Deut. 21:22-23), so the Jewish officials wanted to move quickly. First, they would brutalize the three men crucified so as to snuff out any flicker of aliveness from their bodies. Breaking their thigh bones with a sledge-hammer would do it, and so this was done with the two criminals.

"But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs." They could see that Jesus had stopped breathing, and other clinical clues [not to be discussed with children] told them that He was past further torture.

"But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out." This was a fail-safe and less strenuous way to be sure He was dead; one sharp jab up under the ribcage would puncture liver or heart or aorta; the blood did not spurt as from a beating heart, but as from a pool in one of the ventricles. It is more difficult to figure whether this and the water (clear fluid?) was a miracle or not; the prophecies that were fulfilled as to His bones not being broken (Ex.12:46 as the Antitype of the Passover Lamb) and His side being pierced (Zech. 12:10) are called to our attention, but we have no prophetic notation about the blood or water. Jesus still retains the five deep wound-marks on His glorified body and will retain them through Judgment Day as testimony to both believer and unbeliever (Rev.1:7) of His self sacrifice for sinners.

Matt. 27:56-61 Jesus' corpse awaited claiming by family or friends. The three hours between His death and sundown was a busy time. Joseph went to Pilate with his request to be allowed to claim the body;

Pilate sent for the centurion in charge to see if Jesus had already died; he reported the fact that Jesus was dead; Pilate authorized Joseph's claim to the body, and Joseph (with help from others--though none of the eleven, probably) proceeded with such meager funeral preparations as he could for a hasty entombment so that he and the others could get home yet before sundown.

We are told that Nicodemus (John 19:39-40) was another attendant in this last-hour rush to place Jesus' body to rest. This is the same Nicodemus who had gotten acquainted with Jesus early on (John 3) and was also a member of the Council, who nevertheless had defended Jesus at a Council meeting some six months earlier (Jn.7:50-53) who now came to His side with a large amount (70 to 100 pounds) of pickling spices to pack around the corpse to delay decay; this was the normal Jewish practice for embalming a corpse. Close by was the "garden" with Joseph's cemetery plot, so they could manage to do all this and still get home by sunset if they hurried; whatever else needed doing to complete the burial would have to wait for later, because the Law forbade physical activities on Saturday, the Sabbath.

[Of course, by time they got back to the grave site very early on Sunday morning, it was absolutely too late for a funeral, because Jesus was up before anybody else, wide awake in His glorified body which had been miraculously kept from cellular decay (Ps.16:10)!!]

Joseph of Arimathea deserves some attention because he was also a member of the Supreme Council (Sanhedrin), was a righteous--rather than a hypocritical--Pharisee, had voted against the Council's condemnation of Jesus (Mk.14:64), and had become convinced that the Messiah he had long expected had now arrived in the person of Jesus. In devoted love he quickly wrapped Jesus' body in a clean linen shroud, with helpers carried it to the tomb recently carved out of the rocky hillside for his own use, hurriedly laid the body there, intending to return on Sunday morning to continue the burial (Luke 23:55-56); he (and helpers ?) closed the opening with a large slab of rock that could be rolled into its groove to keep varmints out of the gravesite, and they went home, feeling pretty sad about everything.

STUDENT PRAYER

I am ready and willing to search the scriptures today for the truth about my Savior, and to reflect on who I am in His sight. I want to know Jesus first, myself second, and then everyone else as people You have loved so unselfishly. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Present the lesson by telling the account as a harmony of the four gospels.

APPLICATIONS

1. Regarding Christian funeral, burial, interment: as our Savior brought life and immortality to light, , our death and burial are actually but a process by which we will receive our share in His life and immortality. Our bodies will sleep in the graves until Christ awakens them on Resurrection Morning; until then our souls will be in His keeping pending reuniting with our glorified bodies at the Judgment. Because we don't understand eternity, we don't know how to describe the condition of souls between death and Judgment Day.
2. Further, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the three great pillars of Biblical truth and thus of Christian theology. His life, in obedience to the will of God filled up the defects of our sins; His death was a final requirement as payment for the debt of sins; His resurrection provides public notice that the whole program of salvation was successful. The apostle Paul in particular was sponsored by Jesus to spell it out (justification, redemption, atonement, reconciliation) from

a variety of angles and aspects, as we read in the epistles to the Roman and Galatian congregations.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Phil. 2:8 - He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Heb. 2:9 - ...that Jesus...by the grace of God...might taste death for everyone.

Middle any of the above and...

Jn.10:17 - Therefore my Father loves Me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.

II Tim. 1:10 - Our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.

Jn.12:32 - And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself.

Upper any of the above and...

Rom.6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Heb. 9:12 - With His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

I Cor.15:56-57 - The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

HYMN CHOICES

Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain, Sinners Ruined by the Fall (TLH #149)

Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed and Did My Savior Die (TLH #154)

Lord Jesus, We Give Thanks to Thee (TLH #173)

On My Heart Imprint Thine Image (TLH #179)

Lamb of God, We Fall Before Thee (TLH #358)