

Sun School

“ The Grave of God’s Only Son ”

Jesus’ gravesite is the place of the most pivotal event in history. Every person who has ever lived will eventually be judged by what happened at this location. “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” 1Corinthians 15:17. Jesus has eternal life (John 5:26) to give to all who will believe (John 3:16).

Since Christ’s resurrection happened here, it is important to understand that the events that occurred here are Truth. There should be no doubt in a believer’s mind that nothing was overlooked in Jesus’ resurrection.

Luke 23:53-24:1-2 And he <Joseph of Arimathea> took it <the body of Jesus> down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. ⁵⁴And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. ⁵⁵And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. ¹Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher.

The Sovereign

Luke 23:52 This man <Joseph of Arimathea> went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

Pilate was no friend of the Jews. Before the day of Jesus’ execution, Pilate had never met Jesus, though he probably knew of Him because crowds gathered around Him everywhere He went.

Note how many times Pilate had to interact with Jews because of Jesus:

Pilate’s dealings with Jesus:

Pilate With Jesus & the Jews

The exact order of these events is uncertain. All these events happened, but the exact sequence is not clear from the gospel texts. The times are approximations based on other known times in the text.

Time	Event	Result	Verses
~ 6 AM	Chief priests & elders brought Jesus to Pilate	Jesus sent to Herod, since He was from Galilee, Luke 23:7	Matthew 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28
~ 7 AM	Jesus returned to Pilate for a decision wearing a majestic robe	Pilate tries to appease the priests & elders by giving Jesus a severe beating	Luke 23:11, 16
~ 7:15 AM	Pilate’s wife tells him not to condemn Jesus	Pilate does not take her advice	Matthew 27:19
~ 8 AM	Jesus presented to the crowd after beating	Pilate tries to bargain by offering either Jesus’ or Barabbas to be freed	Matthew 27:17; Mark 15:11; Luke 23:18; John 18:40

Kick political football to King Herod Antipas

Warning

political bargain

- Pilate Roman governor (Prefect) of Judea 26-37 AD

- * politically insensitivity: military standards (images inside Jerusalem), using temple money, promote Caesar worship
- * continuous conflicts between Pilate & Jews
- x final disputes leading to his removal by Emperor Tiberius in ~~36~~ 36 AD due to slaughtering Samaritans

Time	Event	Result	Verses
~8:15 AM	Pilate requests Jesus after hearing the exact charges the Jews brought against Him	Pilate intimidated by the Jews as not supporting Caesar (Rome) if he lets Jesus live	John 19:7-16
~8:30 AM	Pilate turns Jesus over to the Centurion to be executed	March to Calvary, Simon of Cyrene, women of Jerusalem, Crucifixion	Matthew 27:17; Mark 15:11; Luke 23:18; John 19:16
~ 10 AM	Pilate mocks the Jews by posting a sign on Jesus' cross stating "King of the Jews"	The chief priests object to the sign	John 19:19-22
~ 3 PM	Jews ask that the three bodies be removed before the Sabbath	Pilate commands that the condemned legs be broken <i>but not Jesus</i>	John 19:31
~ 3 PM	Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus' body	Pilate was told that Jesus had already died	Matthew 27:58; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:52; John 19:38
Saturday (the Sabbath)	Jews ask Pilate to post a guard at Jesus' tomb	A guard is posted and the tomb has a Roman seal fixed to it	Matthew 27:62-66
Sunday ~ 9 AM	Soldiers tell chief priests of Jesus' resurrection events	Priests bribe guards to lie and protect guards from Pilate	Matthew 28:11-15

Political threat

just another death

Political mocking

Religious request

Pilate's surprise over quick death

Jews fearful of Jesus saying ~~him~~ rising again in 3 days

The Stone

Matthew 27:60 And laid it <the body of Jesus> in his <Joseph of Arimathea> own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he **rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher**, and departed.

super quick burial

Mark 15:46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and **rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher**.

In order to claim a resurrection from the dead, the conquering of death because of sin, we need to be able to be certain where this dead body was laid. If Jesus had been cremated or thrown into a common grave the claim of resurrection would be very hard to prove. But Jesus' friends and enemies both contributed to the certainty of Jesus' burial site.

Normal body preparation in death

The large stone rolled against the entrance to the grave (sepulcher) was prepared at the same time as the tomb was cut out of the rock. Usually, the rock was positioned slightly uphill from the tomb entrance to make rolling it in place easier during a time of grief. There were several reasons for such a device:

Rich man's tomb

- To keep animals from eating the corpse
- To keep the smell from seeping out (see John 11:39)
- To prevent casual passers by from seeing the corpse

- In Jesus' particular case, to prevent the body from being removed

The Seal

Matthew 27:66 So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, **sealing the stone**, and setting a watch.

The stones on these types of graves were usually sealed with mud or clay. The primary purpose was to keep odors from escaping, as mentioned above. In Jesus' case, the Roman Seal was placed in the wet sealing material to signify that only a Roman authority could break the seal and open the tomb. The penalty for breaking a Roman seal was often death.

Roman seal on tomb

Guards around tomb

The Soldiers

Matthew 27:65 Pilate said unto them < *the chief priests and Pharisees* >, **Ye have a watch** < *enough soldiers to guard a site all day and night for several days* >: go your way, make it < *Jesus' grave* > as sure as ye can.

Pilate allowed the chief priests and Pharisees to control a special group of Roman soldiers. Their job was to protect the Roman seal. For these soldiers it was a death penalty offense to allow this seal under their protection to be broken. They didn't care about the grave, or who was inside, only that the Seal of Caesar was set in that mud.

Jesus death well documented

There were several pairs of soldiers assigned to this task in order to provide 24-hour protection of this seal. The group typically would have a sergeant in charge of changing the guard every 4 or 8 hours. An officer of the guard would be in charge of putting the seal in the mud and that their soldiers were cared for (fed, given sleeping quarters, latrine facilities, other necessities.)

The Bible is very detailed in every aspect of *Jesus' life, death, and resurrection*. This sequence of events is called The Gospel, meaning the 'good news' that Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the grave. The details of His gravesite are important not simply because they are in God's Word, but because they also can help skeptics to believe, and cynics to be silenced. Many objections to faith in Christ focus on what happened at His gravesite.

- Many witnesses to Jesus trials & execution.
 - * witnessed by Jesus enemies (Jewish leaders) & Romans
 - * burial witnessed by Romans & Jesus' friends
 - * but Jesus resurrection life only witnessed by His disciples

Additional scriptures related to:

The Sovereign: Joseph of Arimathea, secret disciple

- Matthew 27:58 He < *Joseph of Arimathea* > went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.
- Mark 15:42-44 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴And

- Pontius Pilate represented Caesar Tiberius, Roman emperor

Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling [unto him] the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

- John 19:38 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

The Soldiers

- Matthew 28:4 And for fear of him *<the angel of the Lord>* the keepers *<soldiers of the watch>* did shake, and became as dead men.
- Matthew 28:11-15 Now when they *<the two women>* were going *<to tell the Disciples Jesus had risen>*, behold, some of the watch *<soldiers on guard>* came into the city, and shewed *<told>* unto the chief priests all the things that were done. ¹²And when they *<the chief priests>* were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, ¹³Saying, "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." ¹⁴And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure *<protect>* you. ¹⁵So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

For further study: The Site of Jesus' burial

It is important to know where Jesus was buried in order to know He rose from the dead, that the grave was empty. Note the certainty of the four gospels and how many people watched Jesus' burial:

- Matthew 27:60 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 sepulcher, and departed. ⁶¹And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, **sitting over against the sepulcher.** *women watched*
- Mark 15:46-47 And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and **laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock**, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher. ⁴⁷And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph **beheld where he was laid.**
- Luke 23:55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, **and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid.** *followed Joseph & Nicodemus*
- John 19:41-42 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. ⁴²**There laid they** *<Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea>* **Jesus** therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for **the sepulcher was nigh at hand.**
- John 19:41-42 Now **in the place** where He was crucified **there was a garden**; and in the garden a **new sepulcher**, wherein was never man yet laid. ⁴²**There laid they Jesus** therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.

- Jn 19:39 Nicodemus also came to help with body of Jesus

Furthermore, the stone was rolled away, the Roman seal was broken, and the soldiers (who were supposed to be guarding the tomb) were not at their post, a capital offense.

- Empty tomb. Why?

** for human witnesses to see empty tomb*

x Mt 28:5-7, Mk 16:3-6, Lk 24:2-8, 12, ~~Lk 20:1-9~~ Jn 20:1-9)

x the women saw empty tomb

x Peter & John saw empty tomb

** later more than 500 people saw Jesus alive*

** Jesus' disciples, family saw Jesus alive (1 Cor 15:3-7, Jn 20:19-21)*