

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 19:40-42

"Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices as the custom of the Jews is to bury. 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. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby."

At Easter we often think of Jesus' death and resurrection with little thought to Jesus' burial. Yet this is an important part of the story. The Apostles' Creed even includes it – "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead *and buried...*"

These last verses of John, chapter 19 speak of this burial. Jesus death may have been ugly but His burial was honourable, as least in some measure. He was put in a new tomb, "in which no one had yet been laid..." This was unusual, out of the norm. Jesus, being a crucified criminal would normally have had His body dumped with the other crucified criminals in some kind of common grave. Under Israel's Old Testament laws, Jesus' body would have been cursed because His body had hung on a tree – "For he who is hanged is accursed of God..." (Deuteronomy 21:22,23).

But none of this is what happened. Jesus was not buried in the grave of criminals but was buried more as the King of Israel that He was. He was treated as cursed but as someone blessed of God.

There would normally have been no spices for His body, but instead Nicodemus brought spices for the burial. His body had been anointed for burial before (John 12:7) with expensive spikenard and these spices brought by Nicodemus would have been a great cost as well. This also highlights that it was the rich (Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus) who were His pallbearers.

But though His death was honourable, it was also humble for Jesus was buried in someone else's tomb with no large crowds to express their mourning and sorrow. It was also done in haste, "because of the Jews' Day of Preparation..." The Sabbath was coming.

The very first Sabbath was a day of rest. "On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done..." (Genesis 2:2). Now, here, as Hywel Jones has noted, "The last Old Testament Sabbath began with Jesus' body at rest, after He had accomplished all His work of Redemption."¹

Jesus had cried, "It is finished..." The work was done. Rest was given to our Lord Jesus Christ by His Father. Now we too, when we have trusted in Jesus Christ for our salvation, we also cease from our works. We are "buried with [Christ]..." (Romans 6:4). Rest! What a beautiful word. In Christ we rest from our strivings to build our own righteousness. In Christ we rest from anxiety about whether we are good enough for God.

Jesus, I am resting, resting, in the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatest of Thy loving heart.
Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, as Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power, Thou has made me whole.

O how great Thy lovingkindness, vaster, broader than the sea!
O how marvelous Thy goodness lavished all on me.
Yes, I rest in Thee, Beloved, know what wealth of grace is Thine
Know Thy certainty of promise and have made it mine.²

TableTalk

Read Hebrews 4. Eternal rest is found in Christ Jesus. What does the writer of Hebrews say of those who had originally heard the gospel of rest (verse 2)? What keeps a person from profiting in this gospel?

May this be our prayer: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession..." Our confession of Jesus as our only Lord and Saviour.

¹ Tabletalk, April 2021, pg. 45

² Jesus, I am Resting, Resting, Jean Sophia Pigott