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The Crucifixion and Burial (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg examined the events of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. He demonstrated how the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies proved Jesus' death and ultimate resurrection. Gregg explained the significance of the Passover lamb's unbroken bones and the separation of water and blood flowing from Jesus' side. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Jesus in a new tomb, while Pilate stationed guards to prevent his disciples from stealing the body. These details provide key evidence for the veracity of the biblical account of Jesus' resurrection.

Transcript

It did say that you should not break any of his bones. Not a bone of his should be broken. And so, John is apparently seeing Jesus here as the Passover lamb, and applying that law that applied to the Passover lamb to him here.

Now, Jesus died, he gave up, he could have given up his ghost earlier or later. Apparently he gave up the ghost in the honor of the fact that he died just prior to the time they were going to break the legs, in order that his legs might not be broken, and it could fulfill the scripture that like the Paschal lamb, he didn't have any broken bones. The water and blood that came out of his side has been generally understood to be a proof that he really was dead.

I don't know anything about the physiology about this. I've read people who were supposedly doctors tell about this and so forth. Apparently the heart is encased in a sack with a pus-like or water-like fluid around it.

And it is thought that because this pus is, I don't know if it's thicker than blood or what, but it doesn't mix with blood very much, that the flowing of water and blood separately from Jesus' side suggests that this sack around the heart had been pierced. That means his heart had actually been punctured. And that would be a proof that he was dead, and a disproof of the so-called swoon theory, the theory that Jesus really just kind of fainted, that they mistook him for being dead, put him in the tomb and he revived and came out and everyone thought he rose from the dead.

However, John emphatically says in verse 35, what he does nowhere else in his entire gospel, he emphatically says, and I saw this with my own eyes, this water and blood came out. And I'm testifying to it so you'll believe. Basically he's emphasizing that this water and this blood came out of Jesus, perhaps to indicate the proof that he didn't swoon, he did die, his heart was punctured, a man cannot live in that condition.

And so that was perhaps the final proof that he was dead. This not only fulfilled the scripture about not one of his bones being broken, but the scripture that said, they shall look on me whom they pierced. A lot of commentators feel that this means that this was the fulfillment of that scripture.

They pierced him and they looked at him as they pierced him. It's possible though that it does refer to something later, looking on him whom they pierced, this could still fulfill the possibility of them doing that since he was pierced on this occasion. Had he not been pierced, that scripture couldn't be fulfilled no matter when the subsequent fulfillment was.

So it's not clear whether John means that the passage in Zechariah 12 is referring to the actual piercing of Jesus on this occasion, that's the whole fulfillment of it. Or if the piercing of him just made it possible for at some later date, the scripture to be fulfilled that he had been pierced and they will look at him at that later time. There's different interpretations of that, we've talked about Zechariah not too long ago.

Verse 38, After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus, and Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Now this would be a way of perfuming the body.

The Sabbath was fast hastening. Jesus died at three in the afternoon. Six in the evening, three hours later, would be the beginning of the Sabbath, and no work could be done, beginning at six o'clock Friday night.

That means from the time Jesus died to the time they had to fully bury him and be done with him, it was a three hour time. Now they'd have to go to the hassle of taking down the cross, disattaching the body from the cross, and whatever they were going to do to embalm or wrap up the body, they'd do that, and then they'd transport the body to the grave, get the stone moved. They had only three hours time to do that, and it was apparently a hasty job.

The implication is that they didn't really get him completely mummified or completely embalmed. They didn't embalm in those days quite like we do, but there were certain anointings of the body and wrappings of the body that were customary when there was time to do it. But Jesus was not anointed thoroughly in the way that they normally did,

and that is why, as soon as the Sabbath ended, the women were coming to the tomb early on a Sunday morning, hoping to do to the body of Jesus what had not been able to be done because of the haste of his burial on Friday night.

Anyway, there was something done to his body. Apparently Joseph brought some kind of myrrh and aloes, and it doesn't say what he did with them. They may have been in a bottle, he may have buried them with Jesus as a tribute to him, but he probably poured them over the body.

Verse 40, Then they took the body of Jesus and bound it in strips of linen with the spices. Hard to say exactly what that means. Did they soak the linen in the spices or did they wrap the spices with the body in the linen? Hard to say.

As the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now, in that place where he was crucified, there was a garden. And the garden had a new tomb in it, which no one had ever been laying in.

It was actually Joseph's tomb. Probably a family tomb, and he hadn't lost any family members yet, so it was unused. So there they laid Jesus because of the Jews' preparation day, the tomb was nearby.

So they put him in a nearby tomb. It's possible that they thought when the day passed, the Sabbath passed, that they might come back and bury him properly somewhere else, or even bury him more properly in the same place. But because the preparation was at hand, they put him in a nearby tomb, it says, and did some minimal amount of embalming or whatever they had to do, anointing the body, wrapping it.

But then they left him there. Now we go back to Matthew 27, and there's just a little bit here that we want to cover. Matthew 27, 62 through 66, On the next day, which followed the day of preparation, Now, the day of preparation, we read about that just now in John and here.

The day of preparation is actually the technical name for Friday. That's a Jewish term. The day of preparation is Friday, because the Sabbath was Saturday, and Friday was the day when people had to make all their preparations every week for the Sabbath, which was the next day.

So the preparation day was the name they gave to Friday. They didn't have a name like Friday they gave it, like we do. That was simply their name for that day.

So, the next day, which followed Friday, that is the Sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees' aunts gathered together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember while he was still alive how that deceiver said, After three days I will rise. Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead, so the last deception will be

worse than the first. Pilate said to them, You have a guard, go your way, make it as secure as you know how.

So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard. This is the only gospel that tells us about them putting guards at the tomb. And skeptics have suggested that this may be an afterthought, not a true story about guarding the tomb.

They thought it might be an afterthought because later on, the skeptics believed the disciples did steal the body. And they thought maybe Matthew wrote this in to try to guard against that rumor happening, and say no, they put guards at the tomb. However, if this were an afterthought put in, if it were not true, they wouldn't tell it this way.

Because it says that the guards were supposed to be there the next day after Jesus was buried, leaving open the possibility that the disciples may already have taken the body before that, and the guards were guarding an empty tomb. Of course, that's not likely to be the case. In fact, it isn't the case, I'll tell you why in a moment.

But the way the story is told, it seems like if somebody wanted to make up the story, and leave no loopholes, no possibilities, they would have said, if it was totally made up, they'd say, well, they guarded the tomb from the moment it was buried, just to make sure no one would steal the body. But the way the story is told, it's told truly. It's told the way it really happened.

It was actually the next day that they approached Pilate about this. Apparently, it crossed their mind a little late, and then they came, you know, maybe the night before, and they thought, well, we'd better see to this in the morning. Now, how do I know, since they set the guard only the next day, how do I know that the body wasn't taken prior to their setting the guard? Well, the answer seems obvious.

The reason they set the guard was because they expected the disciples to try something like that. And they would no doubt have checked before they set the guard to see if the body was still there, to see if the disciples had already pulled this off. The tomb was not sealed until this time, which means that when the guards arrived, they could open it, look in there, make sure that what they had was secure.

Remember, in the Roman army, if a guard lost the thing he was guarding, he'd be put to death. If you were a soldier, and you were told, okay, you're going to go guard this tomb for three days, because there's a body in there, and the disciples of this guy may steal the body. You lose him, you die.

You go, don't you think the first thing you do is make sure he's in there first? You're not going to sit there for three days and guard an empty tomb. You'd want to make sure that he was there, because if the tomb turned up empty three days later, you could say, it was empty when we got there. And there's no way, human nature being what it was, and

the purpose of the guard was to make sure the body was there and would stay there.

So, I mean, to suggest that some might, that the disciples actually stole the body before the guards arrived, isn't absurd, because the theft would have been discovered by the guards upon their arrival. They certainly would have checked. And the fact that they sealed the tomb after they came suggests that they secured the body inside.

They must have checked to see if it was in there. The seal, to seal it, it may convey the idea to you that they put cement around the cracks or something so that no air could get through and no one could open it. The seal almost certainly means they put a Roman seal upon it, which didn't so much make it impossible to open, but made it illegal to open.

They put the Roman seal, it would say something like, this tomb is officially sealed by authority of the Roman governor or whatever, which would show that if anyone tried to break in, they were in violation. It wouldn't mean that they somehow made it impossible to open, but only illegal to open, which is why they had to guard it. If they made it impossible to open, they wouldn't have to guard it.

If they cemented it shut and no one could possibly open it, they could have gone home after that and no one would have taken the body. But the seal was there to make it illegal for anyone to interfere, and the guards were there to enforce or put teeth to that particular seal. Now, Pilate told them, you know, go ahead, use your guards.

There were some guards that were at the disposal of the Sanhedrin, and he said, go make it as secure as you can. Now, we are not told how many guards watched the tomb of Jesus. We know that the guards, after Jesus rose from the dead, were somewhat embarrassed and were unable to prevent Jesus from rising from the dead.

And in order to spare themselves trouble, they basically claimed that they slept, which was illegal, that wouldn't get them entirely out of trouble, but that the disciples stole the body. Now, it's interesting. There are some who believe that maybe the disciples overwhelmed the guards.

Maybe there were just a couple of guards there, and the twelve disciples were more than those two guards could handle, or the eleven, Judas being dead. But that's simply impossible. It's impossible to imagine, because to overwhelm the guards, they would have to kill them or wound them.

The guards would not just stand there and say, be my guest, because the guards' lives were on the line. And so the guards would have had to fight, and in order to overcome the guards, the disciples would have to kill them or wound them. Which means the guards would not be in the position to have to say, we were asleep, and the disciples took the body.

They can go and show them their wounds. Look at this. These guys came, and there were too many of them.

We couldn't stop them. I mean, the guard wouldn't lose his life for that. I mean, if a guy is guarding a tomb, and a hundred guys rush on him and steal the thing, I mean, he wouldn't be held accountable for that.

Much more would he be held accountable if he slept. And that's the story they gave, which shows how little they were in a position to give some kind of a story like, well, the disciples beat us up. Because if the disciples did beat them up, that would, of course, leave some evidence behind in the form of wounds or bruises or dead bodies of guards or whatever.

No such evidence was ever pointed to or claimed proves that the guards were not overpowered by the disciples. Now, as far as the story they gave that they slept, and the disciples stole the body, of course, that's very unlikely too. Because if there's more than one guard, even if one tends to be overwhelmed with sleep, because falling asleep on the job is punishable by death for a guard, at least one would make sure he'd stay awake.

And it would only take one, even if there are three or four guards, if all of them slept but one, he could keep guard and wake up the others if the disciples came. The idea that the entire number of guards, however many there were, all happened to fall asleep, which guards just don't do, because their life is on the line, is asking us to believe far more than asking us to believe in the resurrection of Christ, I think. There's really no explanation.

In view of the fact that the guards were placed in the tomb, there's no explanation for the resurrection of Christ that really holds water, except for the biblical explanation, namely that Jesus did rise from the dead, and the guards were simply unable to stop it, to do anything about it. So, we have Jesus dead and buried, and the tomb is guarded. We're going to stop at that point, even though it's quite early, I don't think you'll mind.

We'll stop here, and we'll take the resurrection passages tomorrow and the following.