

We come this week, not only to finish the 19th chapter, but to also complete our consideration of our Savior's humiliation. Historically we speak of the two states of Christ: His humiliation and exaltation. These together, entail His entire work from the beginning to end.

His humiliation began in His incarnation, continued through a life of poverty, shame, and rejection, climaxed at the cross, and ended in the grave. His exaltation began in His resurrection, continued in His ascension and session (sitting at His Father's right hand), and finds its fullest public expression at His second coming.

Let me remind you—our Savior has died. The soldiers seek to break the legs of those crucified, in order to hasten their death. They break the legs of the first two, but then realize Jesus was already dead. So a soldier pierced His side with a spear. Immediately, water and blood flow out. All of this was in fulfillment to two OT texts, and provides numerous spiritual lessons.

Thus, everything that happens to Jesus from v31 and following, merely happens to His body, as His human soul (spirit) has returned to His Father. And yet, as we will see this morning, our Savior's body was precious to His Father, who providentially prepared a people and place to bury Him.

I. The Particulars of Jesus' Burial

II. The Purposes for Jesus' Burial

I. The Particulars of Jesus' Burial

1. There are three particulars I want to examine concerning Jesus' burial—the who, the what, and the where of Jesus' burial.
2. (1) The WHO of Jesus' burial—here I refer to the two men, John informs us, who had a direct hand in Jesus' burial.
3. (a) Joseph of Arimathea, v38—"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."
4. According to Matthew 27:57, we learn that Joseph was a "rich man, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus."
5. According to Mark 15:43, Joseph was "a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God (he has a part of the Jewish Sanhedrin)."
6. John tells us he was a disciple of Jesus, "but secretly, for fear of the Jews"—in other words, he had not yet publically aligned himself with Christ.
7. Apparently, at some point he had become a believer, and yet, for fear of the consequences, he kept his belief to himself.
8. For a prominent member of the Sanhedrin to profess Christ, would have carried with it, rather serious consequences (Jn.12:42).
9. (b) Nicodemus, v39—"And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds."
10. We first learned about Nicodemus back in chapter 3, where we learned he was a Pharisee, and a teacher of the law.
11. When Nicodemus became a follower of Christ, we are not told, but somewhere along the way, he was converted.
12. John describes him as the one "who at first came to Jesus by night," underscoring the fact that he too was of a timid spirit.
13. He came to Jesus by night for fear of the Jews—for fear of having his interest in Christ exposed and made known.
14. (2) The WHAT of Jesus' burial—here I am referring to what these two men did—they bound Him with linen and spices.

15. V40—"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."
16. Our Savior was buried just like every other Jew—His body was wrapped in linen and bound with a mixture of spices.
17. These spices foremostly were intended to adorn and perfume the body—it was a common way to prepare a body for burial.
18. R.C. Sproul—"The Jewish people did not embalm their dead as the Egyptians did, but they did wrap them in a shroud of linen, and they covered the linen with precious ointments and fragrances in the burial process for the simple purpose of disguising the stench of decomposing flesh."
19. John tells us that Nicodemus brought "about a hundred pounds" in spices, which was not common for every person.
20. Most people were bound with far less spices, as a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, was obviously, very costly.
21. This underscores two things—(a) our Savior was buried like everyone else (with spices), (b) our Savior was buried uniquely (with excessive spices).
22. (3) The WHERE of Jesus' burial, v41—"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."
23. From Matthew 27:59-60 we learn, this new tomb belonged to Joseph, who had it cut out of a rock, with a large stone rolled against the door.
24. Instead of digging a hole in a ground, as we typically think of a grave, the Jews often cut a hole in the side of a mountain (this protected the body from animals and vandals).
25. This was a new tomb, in that, no one was buried there—it was not uncommon for more than one person to be buried in a tomb.
26. Christ was buried in a new tomb, so that no one could claim it was not Him but another person who came out of the tomb.
27. And so, while Christ's burial was similar to any other person, there were things about it that gave it a unique dignity.
28. (a) It was a new tomb (it had never been used before)—Christ's body knew no decay, not even that of other people.
29. The tomb our Savior used was new—it was clean—it was free from all decay—the only smell was that of the spices.
30. (b) It was an expensive tomb (few people could afford such a tomb)—such tombs were only used by the very rich.
31. This was the exact opposite of how He came into this world—if you remember, He came into this world by way of manger (and yet, He left this world by way of a rich man's tomb).
32. (c) It was in a garden (which was pleasant), Thomas Boston—"In a garden Christ began His passion, and in a garden He would rise and begin his exaltation."
33. Lesson 1—True grace can exist in the soul in small amounts—this was true of Joseph and Nicodemus, both of which were timid and fearful.
34. I believe we find in these two men, great encouragement for poor Christians, who have felt the pressure of confessing Christ.
35. These two men remind us that Christ has a people who at least begin very weak and fearful concerning their faith.
36. Brethren, remember there are Christians of all sorts—some are strong and bold, and others are weak and timid.
37. J.C. Ryle—"We must not judge every one as utterly graceless and godless, who is not bold and outspoken at present. We must charitably hope that there are some secret disciples, who at present hold their tongues and say nothing, and yet, like Joseph, will one day come forward, and be courageous witnesses for Christ."
38. Now, surely brethren, the example of these two men is not recorded for us, to encourage or foster cowardliness.
39. Nor, do these examples cancel or contradict the clear warning of our Savior, that a person who lives constantly in denial of their faith will be denied by Him.

40. But, what we do learn is this—and it's a very important lesson—there are weak and timid people who are true Christians.
41. Surely this lesson says something to those who fear they are not Christian because they feel themselves too weak.
42. True grace often begins very weak. Remember dear friends, small grace is true grace, and weak faith, is true faith.
43. Lesson 2—True grace, though small, can perform great tasks—what a wonderful example of fearful Christians taking a stance.
44. Though both Joseph and Nicodemus started off slow, they both rose to the occasion when it was needed most (as the apostles were still scattered).
45. Mk.15:43—"Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus."
46. Joseph took courage—he emboldened himself—what was it that enabled him to take courage—I suggest Jesus' death.
47. Perhaps he watched Christ suffering on the cross—perhaps he heard those final words our Savior said from the cross.
48. Before the cross Joseph was afraid, after the cross he found courage and acted boldly regardless of the consequences.
49. O my dear friends, surely this teaches us a very important lesson—nothing emboldens the soul like a sight of the cross.
50. While I can not be certain, I suggest Joseph thought like this—How can I remain a coward when He died for me.
51. Christ went willingly and publically to the cross—bearing my shame and pain—let me publically take a stand for Him.
52. O my friends, few things will embolden the soul and give us courage, then the reminder of what Christ did for us.

II. The Purposes for Jesus' Burial

1. The fact of Christ's burial has been confessed by the church from the very beginning—it is a belief of the church.
2. Apostle's Creed—"I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell."
3. He was born, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, died, and was buried"—His burial is mentioned along with His crucifixion and death.
4. Shorter Catechism (27)—"Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist? A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time."
5. Thus, the question becomes, WHY—Why has the church, from the very beginning affirmed Jesus' literal burial?
6. What were the primary purposes behind His burial? Well, I want to suggest six reasons why Christ was buried.
7. (1) To prove His death—that is, our Savior's burial was a visible and public testimony, that He really and literally died.
8. His body was bound with linen with spices. It was prepared for burial just like any other body. It was laid in the tomb.
9. It's for this reason, Christ's burial became an important part of the gospel message, as proclaimed by the apostles.
10. 1Cor.15:3-4—"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: 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."

11. This is a summary of Paul's gospel that he preached to the Corinthians—Jesus was crucified, buried, and resurrected.
12. He was crucified, buried, and resurrected—His burial was proof of His death, and necessary for His resurrection.
13. Martin Luther—"I believe that Jesus Christ died and was buried. These two depend on each other, the one follows from the other, and the second proved the first. That He is buried proves that He is dead; and His burial is attested by Joseph and Nicodemus who buried Him, as well as by the new tomb in which He is laid."
14. (2) To fulfill prophecy, Isa.53:9—"And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth."
15. This verse contains a contrast—though they made His grave with the wicked—that is, they intended to bury Him with the other men crucified—He was actually buried in a rich man's tomb.
16. The reason is then given—"because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth"—that is, He wasn't really wicked but righteous.
17. (3) To complete His humiliation—our Savior's humiliation began in His incarnation and ended with His burial.
18. John Dick—"Our Redeemer stooped low indeed when He assumed our nature, but lower still when He submitted to be laid in the grave. This is the last degree of humiliation. All the glory of man is extinguished in the tomb."
19. What a humbling thing, dear brethren, to have our bodies laid in the ground—it reminds us all we are but dust.
20. Man came from dust and returns to dust—thus Christ, as the Second Man or Last Adam, was buried in a tomb.
21. Larger Catechism (50)—"Wherein consisted Christ's humiliation after his death? A. Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day; which has been otherwise expressed in these words, He descended into hell."
22. Notice this phrase "under the power of death"—this is what happened in the tomb—He was under the power of death.
23. What does this mean—well, it at least means this—He remained dead while in the tomb—He was under its power.
24. His eyes that looked upon the multitudes with compassion were dark—His hands that helped the sick were inactive—His tongue that spoke eternal things was silent.
25. O brethren, this was all a humiliation to our beloved Savior—His human body was lifeless while in the tomb.
26. (4) To defeat death and the grave—the penalty for sin is not only death, but a returning to the ground from which we came.
27. Gen.3:19—"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."
28. This is a part of the curse, brought upon man for his sin—he toils his whole life, and then he returns to ground.
29. Thus, there is a true sense in which the grave is a part of God's penalty upon man, for his rebellion against Him.
30. As a result, Christ not only needed to endure and defeat death, but He also needed to endure and defeat the grave.
31. John Flavel—"Death is a dragon, the grave its den; a place of dread and terror; but Christ goes into its den, there grapples with it, and forever overcomes it."
32. William Perkins—"Christ gave death a blow on the cross, and so death stumbled into the grave, into which Christ pursued it to destroy it."
33. 1Cor.15:55—"O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"—both have been defeated by Christ.
34. While all Christians die and are buried—physical death and the grave—have lost all punitive aspects to them.

35. Death and the grave are merely natural consequences of living in a fallen world, similar to bodily weakness and sickness.
36. Simply put—the grave is no longer a prison as it is for the non-Christian, but a mere sleeping chamber, wherein our bodies wait our beloved's voice.
37. For those who die outside of Christ, the grave is a prison, which holds its subjects in chains, waiting the day of judgment.
38. Death and the grave are punishments, inflicted upon the unconverted by God, because of their sin and rebellion.
39. And thus, Christ endured death and the grave in order to defeat them, so that neither possess any punitive power over those who believe.
40. (5) To illustrate to us a full salvation—that is, to show His people their union with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.
41. As Christ was crucified, buried, and resurrected, so every believer personally experiences these three in their lives.
42. In His death and burial, we see the end of the old man—that old man that was a slave to sin and to wickedness.
43. In His resurrection, we see the re-creation of a new man, that now loves Christ, and longs to obey and serve Christ.
44. Thus, in Jesus' burial, every Christian can be assured that the old man is dead and buried, never to return again.
45. Rom.6:4—"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life."
46. Thus, brethren, we must ever remember, Christ not only buried our sins in His tomb, but He also buried our old man.
47. And this is precisely Paul's point in Romans 6—Shall we continue in sin that Christ may abound. No way! Don't you know you've died with Him and the old man is buried with Him in baptism.
48. That is, water baptism is a visible reminder that the old man is dead and buried with Christ, and a new man has come out of that grave.
49. Martin Luther spoke about the need to remember Christ's tomb, and to reflect upon it often in our hearts and souls.
50. Martin Luther—"The Christian Creed says, 'I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried.' Therefore, you must learn this part – 'Christ died and was buried' – in such a way that you believe Christ has thereby redeemed, freed, and preserved you from sin, death and the devil."
51. Martin Luther—"Christ's tomb must be regarded not merely with the outward eyes of the body but with the inward eyes of faith. That is, we must believe without any wavering that in Christ's tomb all our sins are covered up and buried. For just as He took all our sins with Him to the cross and bore them in His body on the tree, so also He took all our sins with Him into the tomb; indeed, we are buried with Him through baptism."
52. Thus, there's an obvious and important connection between baptism and Christ's tomb—baptism symbolizes being buried and raised with Christ.
53. And it's for this reason the apostle Paul points the Roman Christians back to their water baptism, to remind them of their union with Christ (every baptism is a funeral).
54. (6) To sanctify and sweeten the grave—remember, our Savior was bound with a hundred pounds of costly spices.
55. Thus, there is a sense in which, what He did literally He also did figuratively, in that He sweetened the grave for every follower.
56. O dear Christian, let us now fear death and the grave, for our Savior has gone before us, sweetening them for us.
57. Luis Berkhof—"The burial of Jesus forms a part of His humiliation. This did not merely serve to prove that Jesus was really dead, but also to remove the terrors of the grave for the redeemed and to sanctify the grave for them."
58. As a result, what is death but a bridge to Christ, and what is the grave, but a sweet place for our bodies to sleep.