



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 19:31-42

"The Delivering Power of the Messiah's Death"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This morning we are turning to John chapter 19 verse 31 through verse 42 for our Scripture reading. And if you have your New Testaments or Bibles then turn there and follow along as I read beginning with verse 31. Incidentally, in the radio broadcast we are continuing the Gospel of John, and so we are in the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John over the radio station.

Verse 31,

"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) (And of course the meaning of that is simply that in this case the Sabbath not simply was the Sabbath but also was a Sabbath of the feast of unleavened bread. And so a special Sabbath day because it was the first day of the feast.) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (The traditional name that has been attached to the Centurion who believed was Longinus, and it is possible of course that this is a reference to him. The term Longinus is probably or perhaps, I should say, derived from the

word for spear, *loncai*, so there may be some connection, but of course it's purely tradition.) And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. (Now quite a bit of discussion has taken place over the person referred to here. Some things can be said for others but probably it's a reference to the author of the gospel. And then he sees in this the fulfillment of Scripture. And he says,) For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, 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. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 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. (There is some importance that attaches to that, and I would like for you to notice that clause, "Wherein was never man yet laid.") There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. We bow together now in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we are so grateful that we are able to gather on this, the first day of the week, and think of the things that concern our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and especially those things that concern his death and burial. We know, Lord, that this is the time of the year in which we remember his incarnation with special emphasis. And we are grateful for that, and we are grateful for the attention that is given to that. And we are especially thankful that the incarnation was on the way to the death and burial and resurrection of our Lord. And we are grateful for these magnificent

redemptive events, because our hope and trust for the future rests ultimately upon him and them.

And today we are so glad to meet with other believers who also rejoice in him and what he has done.

And we ask, Lord, that our time around the word of God may be edifying and fruitful for us. And may it stir us to a more devoted service to him. We are thankful for all of our visitors who are here, Lord, and we pray Thy blessing upon them. And if there should be someone here, visitor or friend, who has not yet come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ we ask that through the preaching of the word of God if it should be thy will the Holy Spirit may bring to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal.

We pray for our country and for its leadership. We know that we are living in critical days, and Lord we pray that Thou wilt give wisdom to President Reagan and those who are associated with him in government. Wilt thou also make it possible for us to continue to freely proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And for the whole church of Jesus Christ today, we ask, Lord, that the Holy Spirit may build us up in our faith and strengthen. Give us a deeper sense of the unity that we have in Christ and of the love that we should have for one another. And we pray that Thy hand may be upon us for spiritual good as a whole. Wherever the church is today in its ministry, in all of its needs, O God, strengthen and encourage, and build up, and bring us to that marvelous day in the future when we shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God..

Lord, be with us in our meeting today, may it be a time of spiritual blessing and help for all of us. And Father, we pray particularly for the sick, for some who are bereaved, for those who have difficulties and trials and problems, or who have decisions that are to be made and who sense the need for divine wisdom and guidance. Lord, we commit all of these and all of these questions to Thee. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the promises that come to us through him. And now, we ask Thy blessing upon the remainder of this service. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] For some of you who are here this morning who are here for the first time or for the first time in some time, you may not know that we have been for two years now approximately expounding the Gospel of John. And I forgotten the exact number of this message, but it's about the eightieth message on the Book of John. And we are in the 19th chapter and are going to undertake to cover verses 31 through 42 this morning. And the subject is "The Delivering Power of Christ's Death." And the reason we have taken this subject this morning is that for the last two messages we have been centering attention upon what John has to say concerning the death of Christ. And while he has more to say about it here, we thought it may be proper to vary the emphasis a bit. And in this last section of the 19th chapter deal particularly with the burial. And so the subject this morning is "The Delivering Power of Messiah's Death."

It was a very dark for the church of Jesus Christ when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. In fact, it was a very dark for the cause of Jesus Christ outwardly speaking. The burial, the last stage of the humiliation of the Lord Jesus is now reached. As one well-known New Testament scholar has put it, "The curtain seemed to fall on unrelieved tragedy." It is reflected in the fact that in the Apostle's Creed the burial of the Lord Jesus is singled out and is set in the context of that creed in the place that lays stress upon the humiliation of the Lord. I know that many of you in Believers Chapel have grown up in churches in which you repeated the Apostle's Creed every Sunday in your service. And you remember that it goes something like this. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried."

Now you can see from this the pattern of things. And it is clear, it would seem, that the burial is one of the low points of the humiliation of the Lord Jesus. It is an account that is stranger than fiction. I think that this is one of those implicit evidences of the inspiration of the word of God. Who would ever have expected the burial account of the Lord Jesus Christ to be like this? If, for example, we had had the gospel and we had had the gospel completed with the 19th chapter and

the 30th verse. And then we were asked to attach at the conclusion of the 30th verse our account of the burial, what would we have written? Well, some of us, I think, would have thought that surely the apostles must have come forward and buried the one with whom they had companied for approximately three years and who loomed so large in their thoughts and in their faith.

Well, if it was not the apostles, we know of course that they all forsook him and fled. John is appears did hang around the cross for some time. But for fear they went off in hiding like wounded animals. Then we might have said if it was not the Lord, it might well have been Mary. Then we might have reasoned, well Mary was probably overcome with grief, and since evidently Joseph was not alive at the time. Perhaps the women who ministered so much to him, they would have come forward and would have asked for the body of our Lord to bury it. But strikingly in the inspired account we read that one of the members of the Sanhedrin and one man whom the Lord Jesus has called the teacher in Israel. There may be some emphasis on that article that is found in the third chapter suggestive of the fact that Nicodemus at least was an important teacher in Judaism. Some have pressed it to the extent of contending that he was the teacher in Israel, as if he was the outstanding teacher there. Of course, we don't know things like this. But he evidently was an important man in Judaism. And it is these two who come forward and request the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what makes it strange is not simply that, but it is also strange that he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Contrary to Jewish custom, he was buried in the tomb of a rich man in a very expensive hued out tomb. Something that you would not expect, in fact Josephus said that "A blasphemer should be buried in an ignominious and obscure manner." And the Lord Jesus was not buried in an ignominious and obscure manner. Of course, students of Scripture might not be surprised because we know that in chapter 53 of the Book of Isaiah when the prophet writes of the suffering servant of Jehovah he writes, "And he appointed his grave with the wicked." And I'm translating loosely from the Hebrew text. "He appointed his grave with the wicked, and yet he was with the rich in his death." And so the prophet had anticipated this, and that perhaps would

therefore not have caused us such surprise. But I dare say we would never have written the burial account in this way. But man proposes and it is God who disposes and so the burial of the Lord Jesus is a most unique account.

Now that is what we are going to look at. And at the beginning of this account we want to pay some attention to the piercing of his side. We have been making the point through this account of the passion of our Lord that there is a great deal of irony throughout it. John we think of as a man who loved symbolism. But he was also an individual, perhaps writing from the time in which he wrote, and it's to be related to that, he was a man who writes with a deep sense of the irony of what transpired when the Son of God was put to death by sons of men, when the King, the Messiah was put to death by those who were at least outwardly claiming that they were looking forward to the Messiah. The Jews were accustomed to straining out the gnat in order to swallow the camel, so we are told by the Lord himself. And so they continued to do their thing here. They are very much concerned about Moses' writings. They do not want to, in any way, violate their tradition.

And one of the texts that apparently meant something to them and because of their concern over it came to mean much to the Christian church, because Paul cites it in Galatians chapter 3 is verse 23 of Deuteronomy chapter 21 in which we read, "His body," that is the body of a person who has committed a sin worthy of death. "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, for he that is hanged is accursed of God. That thy lamb be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." And so the Jewish leaders are very, very anxious to satisfy and vindicate the traditions of Moses. But at the same time that they are vindicating Moses they are humiliating and murdering the one of whom Moses was speaking in the Mosaic Law. So lying back of this is the irony that the Apostle John sees in the event.

In the 31st verse John says, "The Jews," because it was the preparation and that Sabbath day was to be a high Sabbath day being the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They asked Pilate that the legs of those who were crucified might be broken in order to advance their death, and then they could take them down from the cross in order that the lamb might not come under the curse of

Deuteronomy chapter 21. So we read that Pilate evidently gave them permission. And then came the soldiers and they brake the legs of the first thief that was crucified with our Lord. And the other robber which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus they found that he was dead already. And so they did not break his legs. The reason, incidentally, that they were doing this was to hasten the death. And this custom of the *crurifragium* was a very, very horrible form of further torture. It was possible for an individual who was being crucified to rest his weight on one of his legs and prolong his death. But when they came along with the heavy iron mallet and broke the legs then it was impossible to do that. And while crucifixion usually produced a lingering form of death, what ordinarily happened was that when the legs were broken gangrene began and a hasty death usually followed. So that was what they were interested in.

And when they came to the Lord Jesus, however, the soldiers found him dead already. And so they did not break his legs. Now, John finds that very significant. He says, "And he that saw it bare record and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." And then, of course, he goes on to describe how the soldier when he came and saw our Lord was dead already, he took his spear and he thrust it into his side, and there came out water and blood immediately. And John finds that also striking, and he says that another Scripture was suggested to him by that. "They shall look on him whom they pierced." That text from Zechariah is a favorite New Testament cited text. And it's very striking that the different aspects of it are emphasized in the New Testament. In this case the piercing is stressed. In Matthew chapter 24 it is referred to again. And in Zechariah he says, "They shall look upon me who they have pierced and they shall mourn for him." And the mourning that follows the piercing is stressed there."

And in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 7 it appears again, "They shall look upon him whom they've pierced." And since it's set in the context of the Second Advent, stress rests upon the looking upon him there. The writers of the New Testament were careful students of the Old Testament. And they were able to discern the text, its interpretation, and its reference. And so they

refer one aspect of this text to his first coming and another text to his second coming. They're careful interpreters of the word of God.

Now John finds it striking. He finds it so striking that he finds in it a fulfillment of the word of God. Now, the fact that they did not break his legs he relates to Exodus chapter 12, most likely. It's possible that he also referred to Psalm 34. But we're going to take it as a reference to the fact that in Exodus chapter 12 it was said that the Passover lamb's bones should not be broken. And so when John reflecting upon it sees that they passed by our Lord and they did not break his legs, he said, "Ah, that is an evidence of the sovereign direction of God and his providence." The Lord Jesus did not have his legs broken. And thus he is trying; it seems to me, to say to us, "He is the true Passover lamb."

But now, he also lays stress upon the fact there came out blood and water when his side was pierced. Many years ago, I've referred to this several times; you'll pardon me for referring to it again. There is a story about a man named Dr. Brown who lived on a certain street. And there was another Dr. Brown who lived on the street. And one was a doctor and the other one was a preacher. And so someone came on the street not knowing this and knocked on the door of Dr. Brown and asked, "Is this Dr. Brown?" And Dr. Brown said, "Yes, it's Dr. Brown." And he said, "Well, I have a spiritual problem I'd like to talk to you about." And the Dr. Brown who was speaking with him said, "I think you have the wrong Dr. Brown. The Dr. Brown who preaches lives down the street. I am the doctor who practices." That has always been used of an illustration of the fact that there are many who preach that don't practice. And so if I may I would like to just have a little fun with the physicians in the audience. As you know, we have two elders who are surgeons and others who are doctors. I'd just like to point out this, that the doctors who practice differ in their interpretation of this incident about as much as the doctors who preach differ in the interpretation of it as well.

It has been said by some who are medical authorities that there is some evidence for the fact that a person might die of a ruptured heart. And since in one of the Messianic Psalms it says that "Reproach hath broken my heart" in that particular Psalm there has been an attempt to link the two



together. And therefore when we read, "There came out blood and water," and evidence of the fact that the Lord Jesus died of a broken heart. Others have attached importance to a Jewish interpretation to the effect that a man is made up of three parts. He is made up of water. He is made up of blood and of spirit. And since our Lord had died the Spirit had gone and there is nothing left but water and blood. And so when his side is pierced there comes out water and blood.

Still others have said, and this seems very farfetched to me, but nevertheless it has been said by interpreters that the resurrection had already begun, because it is stated, is it not, in the Psalms and in the New Testament, that our Lord's body should not suffer corruption. And therefore here there is the beginning of the process that shall issue in our Lord's resurrection. Still others have attached unusual mystical significance to the fact that the water and the blood came out of the side of the Lord Jesus. Some have suggested that there is a reference to the sacraments and that in the water we have reference to the healing waters of baptism, and then in the blood to the life-giving qualities of the blood represented in the Eucharist. And so interpretations along this line have been preferred by interpreters.

The natural view, and I say view because I think it is probably the most natural interpretation given of it, is that since the heart, according to many medical men, is held in something like a sack that has water about it, that when our Lord's heart was pierced there would come out blood from the heart and water from the pericardium that is about the heart. And it seems to me that that is likely what John is talking about, but since I'm not a doctor who practices but only one who preaches, that's offered with an uncustomary lack of dogmatism that characterizes this pulpit.

Now the more important thing is that the apostle recognizes something important in this. He says, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." And so he sees that in this death of the Lord Jesus there is some spiritual significance. In fact, strikingly in the 35th verse he says, "And he that saw it bear record and his record is true. And he knoweth that he saith true that ye might believe." Now students of the Gospel of John know that he composed his gospel with the intent that through the presentation of the revelation, particularly of the signs, he might bring men to

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing they might have life through his name. So he selected some signs in order to produce through the work of faith in those who read this book with an openness to the divine revelation,

Now, he says that these things have come to pass, and he has spoken about them that they might believe. And so I would like to suggest, and I say only suggest it, that what he is suggesting is something like this is a sign. In fact, it is the real sign. And what John sees then is a real death by our Lord which has redemptive and Messianic significance. Now, I'd like to say it is a real death, because it is likely that John had had some contact with Docetic teaching. And that is that there were individuals, usually I think this is associated first with Cerinthus who believed that the Lord Jesus actually was just an ordinary man. But at his baptism there came upon him the power of God in a unique way. And then at his death the power of God left him, that he himself was not really a man, though for a time he was associated with a human body. And so John and particular John in the New Testament lays stress upon the fact that if we are to be sound in the faith we must believe that not simply the Lord Jesus is the divine Son, but we also must believe that he possessed a true human nature. And so John speaks in his epistle of the fact that if we are to believe and avoid the antichrist we are to believe that Jesus has come in the flesh. So it is likely that he wants to stress the fact that he possessed a true human nature, so human that he was able to be pierced and blood and water is able to come out of his side.

But more important than that is the redemptive Messianic significance that he sees in it. I think that probably he is saying that these events are supernaturally or providentially symbolic of great truths. First of all, I think that agrees with John's style. And then it agrees with the purpose of this book, which is to present our Lord as the redemptive Messiah. So he is saying this is a real death, but it has redemptive Messianic significance. He is the true perfect Passover sacrifice. And by identifying the failure to break his bones with the text from Exodus 12, he is telling us just as plain as he can tell us that he is the Lamb of God. It's John's way of agreeing with the Synoptics who say this

in the context of the observance of the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper. This is John's way of saying much the same thing.

And then also, in the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper also there is a very definite connection with the suffering servant of Jehovah. And in the Synoptics it is evident as you read the account of our Lord's death and particularly of that last event, it's very plain that those synoptic writers regard him as the suffering servant of Jehovah, the one whose task it is to do the will of God, but in doing the will of God to offer the redemptive sacrifice for the people of God. And Isaiah in his great chapters in 42, and 49, and 50, and 52, and 53 lay out the ministry of the suffering servant of Jehovah.

Now here we read "They shall look on him whom they pierced." And so it appears since in Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10 we have a reference to the Yahweh. He is the him, Yahweh; if one reads the context it is Yahweh who is speaking. And then we read "They," the nation "shall look on him who they have pierced. And they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son." It's his way of saying he's the suffering servant of Jehovah. So to put it all together, John sees this as very significant. Something that is for the purpose of men's faith in the Son, he is the one who has died a real death. But he is the last Passover sacrifice, and he is also the one who fulfills the ministry of the suffering servant of Jehovah.

The Christian church has made a great deal over the blood and water, of course. And in some of the practical side of the Christian church's existence, this is reflected. For example, it has been, I think the view of the Christian church that the water suggests the stream of remission from sins or regeneration. And the blood suggests the stream of remission. One finds this in the hymns of the Christian church. For example, Toplady, the Calvinist preacher that we have referred to recently once or twice, in his great hymn "Rock of Ages" he has a stanza that goes like this, "Let the water and the blood from thy riven side which flowed, be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power." And so he sees in the blood and the water the cleansing that is accomplished through the death of Christ, from the guilt and power of sin.

Isaac Watts also was arrested by this fact. And he has written a hymn which has this stanza in it; to my mind it's a little more accurate if we are to make much of this. "My Savior's pierced side poured out a double flood. By water we are purified and pardoned by the blood." So perhaps it is the twin streams of remission and regeneration. Or to look at it another way, if we were to look simply at the usage of John of the terms water and blood we might come to the simple interpretation that John sees true spiritual life in the spirit as flowing from the side of our Lord. And he sees it in this which was for him a symbolic event. As they pierced his side and water and blood came out, he linked it up with the ultimate spiritual significance represented by that fact.

Now I say we don't want to make too much over this, because John doesn't make all of that over it. But at least it seems to me that we have here a real death with redemptive Messianic significance. And in the statement, "That it might be fulfilled," we are taught that he is the true, perfect Passover lamb, sacrifice, and the suffering servant of Jehovah. And the fact that the Lamb is stressed in Exodus chapter 12, and "He has led us a lamb to the slaughter" in Isaiah, links those two together in the scriptural revelation of the Lamb of God. The Passover lamb is the suffering servant of Jehovah, and John has put them together very neatly here. Bishop Westcott said, "Since one text comes from the law and the other from the prophets, we can say that the law and the prophets testify to him."

Now, let's drop that. There is a great deal we might meditate upon in connection with it and a great deal that we could say if we were able to discuss. But I'm not going to give Larry another opportunity to say anything by suggesting that we discuss it. Let's look now at the burial. Now the removal and the burial is described in verse 38 through verse 42. And John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are the two men who are involved in it. Joseph of Arimathea, well Arimathea we are not sure of. Possibly it was Rama, which was about four miles northwest of Jerusalem. And Joseph, if he came from Rama, would have lived a little out from the city of Jerusalem. That incidentally was Samuel's town. Samuel, of course, was the prophet who was named

after me. [Laughter] Some of you don't know my first name is Samuel. But anyway, that's the source of that reference. That's just to be sure that you are awake this morning.

Now the Scriptures say some interesting things about Joseph of Arimathea. They say first of all that he was rich. And they say that he was a counselor, which probably means that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. They say that he was good and righteous. These are statements taken from the Synoptic Gospels. He was good and righteous, probably a reference to his reputation. And also his reputation from being a law abiding member of the Sanhedrin. It's possible that this was written after the fact and good and righteous means that perhaps at that illegal trial of the Lord Jesus he stood up and was a minority in that hour. We do not know. On the other hand, he may well have been absent from that meeting entirely. But he is called good and righteous. And he is also called, and this is very interesting, "The disciple of the Lord." And he was said to be waiting for the kingdom of God. In other words, he was a true believer in the Lord Jesus but no one would have known it, evidently.

Now I have some friends who like to say that if a person is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you will know it. Well, I would like to dispute that. I do not think that that is necessarily true. I think that is ordinarily true. I think that when a man is a believer in Christ you will come to know it. But it is possible for a person to be a secret disciple. And it seems to me that Joseph is evidence of that. God knows it, of course, there must be some fruit. But the fruit is not necessarily fruit that is known by me or by you, but God knows it. There is that definite fruit. Now, of course, I like to see and you like to see the faith manifested so that we can see it. We all like to see a bold representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. But some are not bold. And some are not bold and become bold, as we shall see in Joseph's case.

The other man is Nicodemus. Nicodemus, who is presented only in this Gospel of John. He is a figure evidently who has some desire to know the Lord, and then he moves from desire to a measure of defense of him in the 7th chapter when he said in the midst of their desire to put our Lord to death, "Does not our Lord hear a man, listen to the evidence? Does not the law of God

demand that we hear him before we act?" And now he is one who comes forward in order to bury the Lord Jesus Christ. I'd like to suggest that since the Lord Jesus said to him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." That it is at this point that Nicodemus finally comes to see the brazen serpent. As he reflects upon his relationship to the Lord and as he reflects upon the things that he has heard of our Lord and reflects upon his ministry and then sees him hanging upon the cross through the Holy Spirit. He is brought to a knowledge of the fact that he *hyai seeyet*, he is the brazen serpent. And the faith that Nicodemus came to was something perhaps born in him about this time. At least we can say this about these men, in embalming him they embalmed themselves forever in the word of God. And for nineteen hundred years we have talked about Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus with high regard and affection for the faith and then the practice of the faith that took place ultimately in their lives.

Now the Scriptures say they took the body of our Lord. They wound it in linen clothes. They did probably what was the ordinary thing to do. They bathed the body. They wrapped it in folds of linen with the spices put between the folds. And then they bound up the body with cloth strips. And then they bound the head with a separate little type of covering. And when we get to the 20th chapter we will say something about that. In the 11th chapter, remember, when Lazarus came forth, when he came forth he was bound hand and foot with the grave clothes. So the Lord Jesus was bound, evidently, in the customary fashion.

Now, we have just a few minutes left, but I would like to lay a little stress now on what I would call the personal side of the things that we learn from the burial account. Of course you would not expect someone who teaches theology to pass by some of the theological that appear to us here. But in other places I've said something about that, so I would just like to remind you of a few things. And then we'll talk about the personal side. Theologically when our Lord was buried it was the completion of his humiliation. His active suffering is over. That is, the suffering which he suffered consciously. But his passive suffering continues, because he is still the object of reproach

and contumely from the individuals of his day. In fact, the Lord Jesus does not have a funeral service such as we have. There is no memorial service for our Lord. Our memorial services are services in which we gather in order to pay proper respects to some of our friends who have gone on to be with the Lord. And there is often a eulogy at that point in which we seek to interpret to some extent the life of the individual. There was no eulogy for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course, in one sense when a person is in a memorial service, he is subject to the exegesis of others. He's subject to the interpretation that they put on him. He does not have the opportunity to reply. You cannot rise up out of your grave and say, "Wait a minute, that's not true. You thought it was but it's not," and lie back down in your casket. So in that sense the Lord Jesus is still suffering humiliation in that he is subject to the exegesis of others. So the burial then is the completion of his humiliation. And since there is a comparison in Scripture between the objective facts of his death, his death, burial, and resurrection, and our subjective experience of salvation in our identification with him in his death, burial, and resurrection, and since these correspond to one another, it's striking to note that the burial side is always associated with humiliation, for we are told to put off the old man and put on the new. And if you will note in the biblical records, the putting off is associated with death and burial and the putting on with resurrection. So the burial is the completion of his humiliation.

But in our Lord's case it is also the inception of his exaltation. Because contrary to the ordinary burials, as Isaiah said, he made his grave with the wicked. After all he hung there on the cross between two thieves, between two robbers. As we said last week, it was his inevitable company. He was reckoned to be with the transgressors because there he represented you and me. And since he represented you and me he hung as a transgressor for we are legally transgressors. We have broken the law of God and we stand under the curse.

But now you would have expected him to be buried as a blasphemer was buried, in an ignominious manner. His body taken and thrown upon the burning fire, Gehenna. But instead this rich man comes forward, asks for the body of the Lord Jesus, takes the body to his own estate. And

he had a tomb that had been hued out at great expense, and he was buried in that tomb of the rich man. Yet he made his grave with the rich. It's striking, I think, that it was a new tomb.

Two things are stated that our Lord was involved in that were new. He came on a colt, a foal of an ass, on which no one had ever ridden. And then he was buried in a new tomb in which no one had ever been put. One of the commentators said, "When a king is received the objected devoted to his service are such as have never yet been used." When a king visited a city it was often the custom of a village to build a new road, so that when the king came he came into the city or the town on a new road. It was done as an honor to him, something new. So this was God the Father's way of at the burial of our Lord Jesus just suggesting to us that he is the royal Messiah. And so he is buried contrary to custom. He is buried in a rich man's tomb in which no one had ever yet been placed. It is a magnificent testimony, of course, to the regard that the Father has for the Son and also of the appropriateness of our Lord's burial. So from the garden tomb to the garden of God.

Now, I'd like to say just a few words finally about the delivering power of Christ's death. I know you have read in John chapter 19 here that Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple but secretly for fear of the Jews. He was a man who evidently, a true disciple kept it quiet. Now we read in Mark chapter 15 in verse 43 that when Joseph went in to Pilate and requested the body of the Lord Jesus he did not walk in looking around to be sure that there was nobody there to hear him. But Mark says he went in and boldly requested the body of Jesus. In one case we are told he was a secret disciple. In the other case we are told that this secret disciple has gone in and boldly requested the body of the Lord Jesus. Some men are bold naturally. Some are self assertive, even impudent. We say of some that they rush in where angels fear to tread. And we sometimes think they're fearless because they're brainless. There are individuals like that.

But here are evidently two naturally timid cautious men. I don't know the force to put upon the fact that Nicodemus went in to be with our Lord and asked him those questions in the night time. But it certainly is harmonious with this evaluation of his character. And Joseph it is said was a secret disciple, so here are two naturally timid cautious men who in a sense break with their natures,



defy themselves and conquer eternally. How? Well I can only suggest to you, I suggest to you that it is related to the same thing that was said to Mary about the cross. She was told when our Lord was just an infant that the time was coming when the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed. And in fact, her own heart also would have the terrible experience of being pierced by a sword. "Yeah a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

I would like to suggest to you that it was the experience of the observation of the cross and of the great stress placed upon in it in these last days that brought both Joseph and Nicodemus to the boldness of faith, perhaps salvation in Nicodemus' part, that is manifested in their burying of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I find that striking. Because here is Joseph taken captive by the words of the Lord Jesus and the signs perhaps that he had formed. And having had formed in him a feeble kind of faith, but the life of our Lord, the signs that he performed, the discourses that he gave did not bring the bold avowal of faith that came at the time of the cross. But then they stood by the cross. I would suggest to you, and I cannot prove this, some other scholars in this audience may be able to disprove this, but I would suggest to you that probably Joseph was very near to that cross, because he would not be able to do what he did and put the body of our Lord in the grave before sun down had he not been relatively close. But at any rate I suggest that in Joseph's case and perhaps in Nicodemus' he had stood by the cross. He had reflected upon it. He had reflected upon it in the light of his own life. And he had gone over his own guilt. And as he looked at his own guilt and trespasses and his own nature in the light of the red love manifested on the cross before him, the irresistible appeal of the cross of Jesus Christ fell upon him, and Joseph then made his bold avowal of faith.

I love what Mr. Spurgeon says, he says, "The sun has owned him and veiled its face. The earth had owned and trembled at its heart in the earthquake. The temple, in horror, had rent its veil from top to bottom. The graves, ultimately, gave up their dead. And Joseph must own him too." And then he adds, "The cross is a wonderful magnet that draws to Jesus every man of the true mettle." I've loved that statement ever since I've first read it. The cross is a wondrous magnet that

draws to Jesus every man of the true mettle. Now you'd expect a Calvinist to think that's a great text, because it lays great stress upon the fact that there is a sovereign activity of God in the salvation of all of us. But the cross is the center of the attraction for the believer of Jesus Christ.

And I'd like to say in conclusion, how many of us are like Joseph? We love his words, we treasure his love, but for some love of place, some love of pleasure, or some love of position we've not really given ourselves to him. Like Joseph we are secret disciples. Perhaps like Nicodemus we have not yet come to the faith that saves. And those of us who are like Joseph are wondering why we are defeated, why we are fearful, why our lives as Christians are empty. And I suggest that it may be because we do not, by the grace of God, we do not by the wisdom of God and the grace of God and the plan of God, we do not yet appreciate the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. And so may I and may you as well, may we stand before the cross and see the blood and water and believe, if that is what we need, believe to salvation in the one who has offered the atoning sacrifice for sinners. And then if we have already believed may God enable us to measure our life by his love and boldly give ourselves to him.

If you are here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we invite you, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, to come to Christ and receive the forgiveness of sins. Remember, the Lord Jesus offered the atoning sacrifice for sinners. And if by the grace of God you have come to an understanding of your lost condition, that you are a sinner, under divine wrath and condemnation Jesus Christ's salvation is for you. So may God give you grace to come to him, believe in him, and receive as a free gift everlasting life. Not through joining the church, not through observing the sacraments, not through good works, not through membership in a church, not through culture, education, or any form of good endeavor on your part. But come as a lost sinner and receive as a free gift the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help you in his marvelous, saving grace to come.

And for those of us who have believed, may God enable us to truly sing that stanza, "I take oh cross thy shadow, for my abiding place. I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face.

"The Delivering Power of the Messiah's Death" by S. Lewis Johnson  
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Content to let the world go by to know no gain nor loss. My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross." May God help us truly to have that attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent account, for the great events of it, especially for the blood that was shed. But we thank Thee also for the faith of Joseph and Nicodemus. And we pray that we may emulate them into...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**