

Mt. 27:57-61 (LD 16) "All the Way"

For the Children: If you "sub" for an injured team-member in a sporting event, you will probably want to play through the rest of the game. Someone who is serious about filling-in for someone else doesn't leave part-way through, as if that's all that is required of him. Even if the game gets tough, he will try to do all the missing player would have done. The Lord Jesus substituted for us when He died, was buried and experienced hell on the cross. These are things that sinners don't normally survive. But Jesus experienced all parts of the curse and overcame them. That is why when we die, we don't go to hell. That is also why our bodies don't stay dead and buried forever. **Questions:** What good comes to us from Jesus' death? Why was it important for Jesus to be buried in Joseph's tomb? What does it mean that Jesus "descended into hell"?

Introduction:

First Point: Dead

- 1) Proof of Death: Jesus' body was completely dead. Hence Joseph asks for the "body" (vss. 58-59). The text refers 3 times to His body as "it" The body was prepared as usual for the dead. There were a number of witnesses to this – Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the women mentioned in v. 61. The chief proof that Jesus had died is that the Word of God says so!
- 2) Sin Paid Up: Jesus' death is emphasized because it is so important for our salvation. To save us, He had to suffer all that the curse lays upon us – including physical death. He also had to die before He could be raised – which is also necessary for our resurrection. See Q/A 40.
- 3) The Death of Sin's Power: The death of Christ was also necessary to break the power of sin in our lives. We go through an analogous experience: we die to sin and then begin to live to God. The net result is that our physical death becomes merely an entrance into eternal life. See Q/A 42-43.

Second Point: Buried

- 1) With a Rich Man: Jesus' burial is more than proof He was really dead. It also fulfills Is. 53:9, in that His body is placed "with a rich man" – in Joseph's tomb. No one else was prepared to deal properly with the Lord's body. But in God's providence, a man who had previously been rather cowardly, suddenly steps forward to provide a respectable site for the burial. God is honouring His Son – the first sign of exaltation, soon to be followed by the raising up of the Son of Man.
- 2) Final Payment: Chronologically, burial is the final step of Jesus' humiliation. Jesus had to take our place, experience all demanded by the curse, even to its most final point. He had to be cut off from the living, from all He had worked for; He had to be rendered ineffectual, as if He, too, would soon be forgotten. But since He exhausted the curse, He didn't stay there – so we don't have to.

Third Point: Cut Off

- 1) The Nature of Hell: The curse also involves sinners being cut off from fellowship with God. Therefore Jesus, in His human nature, had to be cut off from the experience of His Father's love and support. He had to experience instead the weight of God's wrath against sin. Hell is the experience of God-forsakenness, combined with physical agony. This is normally final for sinners. But again, Jesus exhausted the curse, so He did not remain forsaken. That is why we do not have to go to hell.
- 2) The Most Intense Part: The experience of hell is the most intense part of Jesus' humiliation. That is how we understand the order of events in the Apostles' Creed – death, burial and hell are in order of intensity of humiliation.
- 3) When It Happened: This also means that the Lord did not descend into the place hell after He died. That is a misinterpretation of 1 Pet. 3:18-120. Jesus' body remained in the tomb for 3 days; His human soul was with the Father in heaven. That is why we can be sure that when we die, our souls will be with God in heaven, while our bodies remain in the grave until the Day of Restoration.

Conclusion: