

The Gospel According to the Scriptures
Part 2: How that Christ was Buried
I Corinthians 15:3-4
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

Today will be a continuation of a series I've begun on "The Gospel According to the Scriptures," as it is so described in I Corinthians 15, verses 3 and 4. And while these messages will stand alone, if you missed Part 1 of this series, I would encourage you to get a copy as each part of this series will be complementary to the others. Those of you who did hear that message will recall that I dealt with "How that Christ Died," according to the Scriptures. And you will recall that we focused on not just the circumstances of His death but rather, the significance of His death.

When we consider the Apostle Paul as an example in his ministry of the gospel and consider his words in I Cor. 2:2 where he wrote, "***For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,***" well, then we recognize that a gospel ministry will always focus on this subject – the death of Christ. So obviously, I've only scratched the surface of this glorious subject. We can never exhaust this subject but in keeping with the text of I Corinthians 15, today I want us to consider specifically the significance of "How that Christ was Buried" – again, as set forth in the "Gospel According to the Scriptures."

II. Primary Text: I Corinthians 15:3-4:

Let's look again at our text in I Corinthians 15, where Paul is describing the gospel which he had preached to the Corinthians, the Gospel that these to whom he writes believed as the first verse of chapter 15 declares. And then in verse 3, as he describes the gospel, he wrote, "***For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.***" You may recall my emphasis on the word "how" in verse 3 and the phrase found in both verses 3 and 4, "according to the scriptures."

III. Brief Review of Part 1 of this Series:

Now by way of review, I'll remind you that we began our survey of this 'gospel according to the scriptures' by considering many of the Old Testament scriptures – the same scriptures available at the time when Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Corinth. And as I pointed out previously, today we have the benefits of the progressive revelation of the New Testament which must be in harmony with that of the Old Testament – for collectively it is all God's inspired word of truth. So the "Gospel according to the Scriptures" as set forth in the Old Testament is no other than the same one truth concerning how God saves sinners – the same specific Gospel message as set forth in the New Testament.

You may remember in addressing "How that Christ died" according to some of the scriptures at their disposal, (such as Isaiah 53, Daniel 9, Psalm 22, and others), we reviewed some very basic, but vital truths of the Gospel, even as we see in vs 3 of our text. Specifically, that:

A. Christ Died for sins

B. Christ Died for "our" sins -- Substitution – That is, Christ died as a Representative, a Surety, a Substitute for His sheep – collectively referred to in Romans 11 as the "election of grace."

C. You may also recall that we considered 3 aspects of Christ's substitutionary work.

Specifically, we considered how He was:

1. A Sinless Substitute

2. A Suffering Substitute – a suffering of such value that it paid the sin debt for a people that an eternity in hell could never pay as evidenced by the eternal death of those who perish without Christ.

3. A Successful Substitute – therefore a Savior. He saved His people from their sins.

And from these simple, but evident truths according to the scripture, we see how the Gospel, according to the scriptures, sets forth the merits of what Christ accomplished in His obedience unto death – referred to as His very righteousness (His perfect satisfaction to God's holy and strict justice) – as the sole basis of a sinner's acceptance before God. As Romans 1:16-17 teach us, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes because therein is this very righteousness of God revealed. It is revealed by God-given faith in the hearts of each and every one of His sheep, His elect.

So to believe God's gospel – the Gospel Paul preached concerning how Christ died, was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures – is to look exclusively to Christ and His righteousness for all of our salvation. In other words, God's gospel of grace sets forth how all of the conditions for each and every sinner who is saved were fully met by that sinner's Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as 2 Cor. 5:21 teaches us, just as the believing sinner's sins were imputed or charged to their Substitute that He might bear the penalty due unto them before God's justice, likewise, by the same means, His very righteousness is imputed or charged to the account of each and everyone for whom He lived and died. What a glorious truth!

IV. How that Christ was Buried according to the scriptures: Well, as we consider again our text in I Corinthians 15, note that just as Paul described the content of the gospel message that He had delivered unto them as "...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures," that in verse 4, he adds, "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." And today, I want to draw your attention to the significance of the burial of Christ in the context of the Gospel. Of course, its significance is inseparable from the significance of His death and resurrection. The little conjunction "and" at the beginning of verse 4 makes that obvious to us. But in today's session, we will focus on the significance of this aspect of the Gospel – the truth and significance of Christ's burial to believers, in the context of the overall Gospel message. Just as Christ died and rose again according to the Scriptures, he was likewise buried according to the scriptures.

A. The Circumstances of His Burial: So, let us consider how the scriptures set forth the burial of Christ.

1. His Burial Prophetically Foretold – First, as with Christ's death, His burial was likewise prophesied of in the very Old Testament scriptures available at the time of Paul's writing. To cite a few examples, consider...

(a) Psalm 16:9-10: In Psalm 16, we have Christ speaking through the Psalmist saying in verses 9 and 10, "***Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. ¹⁰For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.***" Now the Hebrew word translated "hell" there does not describe the place of eternal death for unbelievers but rather it is the word, "sheol" (sheh-ole') which simply means the grave. Here, Christ, through the Psalmist, is rejoicing in the truth that He would not be left in the grave long enough to even experience the corruption of the flesh. So in stating His body would not be left there, it is clear that it must reside there for some manner of time – that His bodily flesh would indeed be placed in sheol, meaning a subterranean place or a grave – as would describe those tombs carved out of rock such as the one in which His body was laid according to the historical accounts of the New Testament. But it would not be left there.

(b) Isaiah 53:8b-9: And then in Isaiah 53 in the prophecy of Christ's substitutionary work, we read, beginning in the latter part of verse 8, "***...for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ⁹And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.***"

- (1) Now you will note first that I highlighted the end of verse 8 because it again emphasizes that as in all that Christ did (His obedience unto death, His burial, and resurrection) it was all for His people as a Substitute. This is key to a proper understanding of the Gospel and I'll refer you to the previous message, part I of this series, that dealt with how Christ died for the sins of a people and the numerous scriptures proving this truth concerning the vicarious, substitutionary nature of Christ's accomplished work. But we see that truth again here in verse 8 of Isaiah 53.
- (2) Now the words of verse 9 are understood by most as a reference to what is revealed in the New Testament to precisely have taken place later on in history in His death and burial; that Christ, who died with wicked men, (being hung on the cross between two thieves as if He Himself had been one), was buried in a rich man's grave. In other words it is understood here that God the Father made His (God the Son's) grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death; for he died between two thieves, and a rich man, Joseph of Arimathaea, begged for the body of Jesus. And then, along with another rich man, Nicodemus, they prepared the body and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in Joseph's own sepulcher – His own tomb located in a garden and hewn out of rock for himself – a tomb which the scriptures tell us no other man had ever been laid. Apparently, it was common for multiple bodies to have been buried in a single tomb – but not in this case. And as a result, it could not be argued that it was any other than Jesus who arose from that tomb.
- (3) And this burial in the new tomb of a rich man is cited as an appropriate honor due unto Him as it reads, “...***because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.***” In other words, it was a reflection of the truth that in reality, He was not guilty as accused, unlike the thieves who hung beside Him, no false doctrine or deceit was delivered by Him, and He was not seditious to the Roman government. In short, He was not guilty of any manner of sin – all contrary to the charges made against Him. As we observed previously, He was a sinless Substitute and so honored in His burial through the actions of Joseph of Arimathaea.

2. His Burial Typified – And as we consider the circumstances of His burial, we cannot ignore how it was not only prophesied, but also typified, most notably in the Old Testament story of Jonah. Christ Himself took notice of this type in Matthew 12:40 when the scribes and Pharisees asked Him for a sign and He replied that no sign would be given to them other than the sign of the prophet Jonas (or Jonah). There in verse 40 He said, “***For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.***” – referring to His time in the grave.

3. So we see in the circumstances of His burial that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah that the Old Testament scriptures pointed to; however, again one can concur with the reality of history concerning His death, burial, and resurrection, and yet still not believe God's Gospel. Such would be the case if one fails to see the significance of what was accomplished thereby, again – according to the scriptures. So, let us move on to that – the significance of the burial of Christ to all who come to believe God's Gospel.

B. The Significance of His burial:

1. First, let us consider that a burial shows the truth or reality of death. There are many ways to prove that one is dead, but perhaps none more convincing than this. For He was taken down from the cross and buried, not by enemies, but by friends who would never bury Him alive. Nor would Pilate deliver the body to them until he was certified by the centurion that He was indeed dead. His death was real!
2. Secondly, consider that by His burial it showed that the curse of the cross was at an end – that there was finality to what He came to accomplish – that the curse due unto Him for the sins that He bore / for which He died was entirely abolished. And so His burial shows that by His sacrificial death, He had made full satisfaction – completed the work. It was indeed finished. As the prophecy of Daniel 9:22 puts it, He had made “an end of sins.” Remember how Christ, Moses, and Elijah appeared together on the Mount of transfiguration and as recorded in Luke 9:31, we read about how they spoke “...*of His decease which he should accomplish in Jerusalem.*” Well, His burial shows the finality of His decease – His accomplishment.
3. Thirdly, for believers, His burial should remove the dread of the grave for us. For Christ, as our Representative and forerunner pursued death, the just dessert or the wages of sin – what we deserve – the enemy of sinners – He pursued all the way to the grave and He emerged victorious over it. So that believers might likewise sing in heaven's glory (as is recorded later on in same chapter of I Cor. 15, beginning in verse 55), “*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” ⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* (Sin is powerful to condemn because God's holiness, His law, demands it) ⁵⁷*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” He satisfied the law for His people and put away their sin – and thereby, overcame death and the grave for them! As the previous verse, verse 54, puts it, “...*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”
4. And last, but not least, I want us to see how that in Christ's burial, all the sins of His people were buried with Him. Turn with me to Romans 6. As you turn, consider with me that this truth is represented in the ordinance of Baptism as the submersion and subsequent rising out of the water exhibits and testifies of the union of the believer in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ – as a profession and testimony that this is the sole ground of their salvation – testifying of their sole reliance on the salvation He accomplished for them as a Substitute in His death, burial, and resurrection.

- (a) Follow along now with me in Romans 6, beginning in verse 1, where we read, ***“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ²God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, <i.e. – to its penalty of death> live any longer therein? ³Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? <Now ‘baptism’ here is not referring to the ordinance of water baptism but rather refers to the believers union or oneness with Christ. In this sense, to be “baptized into Jesus Christ” means to have been placed into Him so that it can be said when He died, I died – not personally, but truly so in my Representative and Substitute for He did what He did for a people!> ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death:<i.e. – so that we have all of the fruits of His death> **that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**<He lives and so do all those who were planted together in Him –those He represented. They shall live in that they shall walk in the newness of spiritual life, having been born again and likewise, they shall rise again at the last day unto everlasting life in heaven’s glory> ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, that our old man<all that we are as sinners by virtue of our representation in Adam> **is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed,**<that means rendered powerless> **that henceforth we should not serve sin.** <That is we are no longer in bondage to it> ⁷For he that is dead is freed from sin. <Freed there means justified – declared righteous and not guilty before the law – How? Based upon my own righteousness – NO! But based upon my oneness with Him – the merits of His perfect obedience unto death in full satisfaction to all the holy law of God demands made mine as an object of God’s pure, unadulterated grace!> ⁸Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” There is our consolation – to know I, though still a sinner, am dead to the guilt of sin and in Christ victorious over it.***
- (b) Colossians 2 addresses those who have been quickened with Him (given spiritual life). And it describes them in verse 12 as ***“Buried with him in baptism, <again, speaking of the baptism of His death> wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”*** So all who possess spiritual life as evidenced by their belief in God’s Gospel (not a counterfeit) can know that their sins were truly buried with Him – totally put away. For the very righteousness He established thereby in satisfaction to the justice of God demands their life, just as surely as God raised their Substitute from the grave – for He was raised for their justification (so says the scriptures).

(c) You see, it is an important truth of the Gospel, according to the Scriptures, that in His death, burial, and resurrection – in all that He did – He did so not for Himself, but as a Substitute for a people, acting as a Representative and Surety. And even now He sits at the right hand of the throne of God, ever making intercession for His people (a bunch of sinners, but sinners saved by grace). He intercedes before the Father on their behalf, all based upon that which He accomplished for them and which God charges or imputes to their accounts.

C. So, then, is it possible that any who were baptized or planted in Christ Jesus – whose sins were rendered powerless by Him – still suffer in hell for them or fail to come to Him in the newness of spiritual life? Only if He failed.

V. Summary:

You know, after Christ had risen, all they found left in the tomb were His grave clothes with which He had been bound. In His resurrection He left these behind, this typifying how the sins of His people are said to be put behind His back so as to be seen or remembered no more – never again (Heb. 8:12). And so, likewise, those whose sins were buried with Him, the grave clothes they bring into this world as spiritually dead sinners – the grave clothes of their sins (including their false notions of how God saves sinners – the way that seemed right to them) – these are likewise all left behind in their newness of spiritual life.

You see it was the grave clothes of their self-righteousness, their self-love, their religious pride – their sin! And it was for just that – their sins – that He died so as to put them away by His sacrificial, substitutionary death. They were loosed from the bondage of those clothes and wrapped in the glorious robe of His righteousness – made fit for His presence. Their sins were buried with Him and those grave clothes left behind. The body of sin was destroyed – rendered powerless! So, not one for whom He died shall possibly perish or else He failed to accomplish that which He, the God-man, came to do.

Today, I recognize that most religious people (including the majority of those who consider themselves of the ‘Christian’ faith) have not yet seen or embraced the necessity of possessing by God’s grace that which Christ accomplished on the cross, His righteousness. I pray that someone you who hears this message will flee to Him – having been convinced by God’s Spirit that you too must be found, not having a righteousness of your own, i.e. not seeking salvation based on something you do or don’t do (your act of faith, etc.) – but being persuaded that you must have the merits of Christ’s work and that alone will do – that your sins must be buried with Him – that there is no hope otherwise – no hope apart from the grace of God in Christ.

And what a blessing it is if you're among those to whom God has been pleased to reveal Himself. Such describes those who were planted together with Him in His death, burial and resurrection for it is by that very same resurrection power that God grants them spiritual life.

And to those of you who have been so blessed – to you I say, rejoice in Christ Jesus and in the knowledge that such a revelation of God-given faith is evidence of spiritual life and so, evidence that all of your sins, past, present, and future were all buried with Him. Yes, sin's presence will plague us throughout our lifetimes, but the debt due unto them all before a holy God – a debt which none of us could pay or can even contribute toward paying – has been paid in full for us. That sin was buried with Him. You see all who died with Him, were buried with Him and all who were buried with Him shall live with Him – and that forevermore!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.