

The Events of Holy Week: Holy Saturday (4/11/2020)

Jesus died at three o'clock in the afternoon on Good Friday. The Sabbath Day (Day of Rest) was only three hours away. A man named Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who was a member of the Jewish Ruling Council, had little time to carry out his final acts of love for his dear, dead Lord. Up to that time Joseph kept his faith in Jesus a secret, because he was afraid that if his faith was found out, he would be put out of the synagogue and be ostracized by his fellow Jews. But when he witnessed our Lord's valiant death on the cross, he boldly went to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and asked for Jesus' body. With Pilate's permission both he and Nicodemus, his fellow Councilor who also believed in Jesus, hastily took his body down from the cross. Joseph provided the burial linen and Nicodemus provided about 75 pounds of burial spices—a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They wrapped his body, with the spices, in strips of linen and carried it to Joseph's newly cut out tomb in which no corpse had ever been placed. Then they rolled a large stone over the mouth of the tomb and went away. It's worthy to note that both at the beginning of his life and at the end of his life there was a man named Joseph who protected Jesus' body. Joseph, the Virgin Mary's husband, protected both Mary and the baby Jesus who was in her virgin womb. Joseph of Arimathea protected Jesus' body in a virgin tomb.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who was the wife of Clopas and the mother of James and Joses, witnessed these final acts of love. Because of Joseph and Nicodemus' hasty job of burying Jesus, the women planned to give their Lord a proper burial after the Sabbath Day. So they went home and prepared spices and perfumes, but rested on the Sabbath.

But Jesus' enemies didn't rest. It's interesting. All of his disciples were filled with hopelessness after Jesus' death. Why? Because they completely forgot that on a number of occasions Jesus had foretold his resurrection on the third day. But Jesus' enemies didn't forget. They were terrified that he would rise from the dead. That's why on the Sabbath Day they went to Pontius Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception [that Jesus rose from the dead] will be worse than the first [that Jesus is the promised Messiah]." "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure. They put the governor's wax seal on it, warning severe punishment for anyone who broke that seal and opened the tomb. They also posted a guard of Roman soldiers.

Their paranoia led them to take drastic measures to keep Jesus in the tomb. But those drastic measures actually served the gospel. They guaranteed that nobody touched Jesus' body. There would be only one explanation of the empty tomb. Jesus had physically risen from the dead and passed through the walls of the sepulcher. The Jews' Sabbath plot seeking to sabotage Jesus' resurrection actually confirmed his resurrection from the dead as factual.

The seventh-day Sabbath Rest was a weekly picture that foreshadowed how Jesus would give us rest for our souls by lifting the burden of guilt off of us. It also foreshadowed the everlasting rest that we will enjoy in heaven. We thank Jesus' enemies for certifying his resurrection from the dead, making us sure of our salvation.

Rest, O Christ, from all your labor; Sleep within your borrowed tomb.
Foes have crucified and bound you Fast within death's narrow room.
Pilate's guards stand watching, waiting Where they rolled the sealing stone.
All unseen another watches: God will not forsake his own.

Peace at last from all your anguish, Wounds in hand and feet and side.
Enemies no longer mock you, Scourged, abandoned, crucified.
Faithful women gather spices, Weep for you whom sin has slain.
Though they mourn, the God who guards you Will not let your death be vain.

Help us keep this solemn Sabbath As we wait for Easter dawn.
Earth's dark night of sin is passing; Death's long reign will soon be gone.
Christ, in whom the new creation Rises brighter than the sun:
May we, as we watch for morning, Trust the vict'ry you have won.

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read the Sabbath Psalm: Psalm 92.

Pastor Zuberbier