



57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: 58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. 59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. 61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. 62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. (Matt 27:57-66)

Yesterday we observed Good Friday in churches everywhere by entering the church in an attitude of quietness and solitude in reverence to the occasion. Of course, that is the attitude with which we should always enter the place of worship, but more so on Good Friday since it commemorates the suffering of our Lord on the cross. Today, however, being Easter Even (or Holy Saturday), we maintain an attitude of reverence at every place and at all times of the day. It is the Lord's Sabbath as He rested in the Garden Tomb throughout this Holy Sabbath.

The events of the past day have been horrific ones for the disciples. The Lord was crucified and buried before the sunset of the Sabbath (Friday evening) to satisfy the Law of the Moses and the Sabbath commandment of God. Along with the Body of Christ was buried the hopes and joys of the disciples. They did not comprehend the enormity of all that had transpired even though the Lord had reminded them often of what to expect. He also reminds us in His Word of those things important to our lives, and those reminders often go unheeded since we either choose to ignore, or fail to understand, His clear Counsel. Quite remarkable is the fact that Golgotha, the place of crucifixion, lay facing the Valley of Gehenna – the area of garbage and waste disposal of Jerusalem. It was most common to cast the unclaimed bodies of those crucified into the Valley of Gehenna. Christ came to save us from the sins and filth of the world. So is it apropos that His place of sacrifice was opposite that Valley of Waste.

Jesus had told His disciples: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”* (John 12:23) Now that Body of Jesus will be buried in the heart of the earth, and will spring forth with vibrant and multiplied brilliance of life. We are buried in corruption, but arise in incorruptible bodies because of the grace of our Lord. *“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain* (1 Cor 15:36-37)

Before addressing the sepulcher itself, let’s look at the nature of those who remained with Jesus until the very last – the women disciples! They were at the cross with the lone man, John, as Christ was crucified. They remained until He was taken down from that cross, and they followed on to see where Christ would be buried. *“And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.”* Remarkably, these were also the very first to discover the opened Tomb on Easter morning (while it was yet dark). These women were also the first to carry the Resurrection Gospel to the other disciples. It took courage for these women to steadfastly remain by the side of the Lord, even in death, while the other disciples dispersed in hiding.

Christ died at the moment of sacrifice of the Passover Lamb in the Temple (at 3:00 pm). Because the Sabbath day drew on at sunset, it was necessary that He be buried before that time to avoid abrogating the Sabbath Law of rest. So, our Lord, obedient to the Law of God – even in death – kept the Sabbath from sunset Friday until at least sunset on Saturday. He arose sometime before it began to dawn toward the first day of the week (Matt 28:1, Sunday). Jesus kept the Sabbath while in the Garden Tomb. The Jewish leaders who had so vehemently criticized Christ for violating the Sabbath by healing miracles, now labored much by running to Pilate to request a guard for the Tomb. Such marvelous hypocrisy exists in most churches around the world today.

#### **THE SEPULCHRE:**

1. **Its location** – Sin had brought death to Adam and his progeny in a Garden eastward at Eden. It is very appropriate that the Body of our Lord would be planted in a Garden Tomb from which would spring forth forgiveness and mercy, and life eternal. This Garden Tomb was located nearby Calvary Mountain.
2. **Its Owner** – Joseph of Arimethaea was a wealthy disciple of Jesus - though secretly in times past for fear of the Jews. *“Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.”* (Mark 15:43) Amazing that some men feared to be associated with Christ while He was yet alive, but are emboldened with courage once He has redeemed us. Joseph was such a man. We are told, moreover that Nicodemus, too, came with Joseph. *“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.”* (John 19:39) Please observe that from the moment that Nicodemus came at night to see Jesus (John 3), John always alludes to him as the one who came at night. This is to contrast his lack of courage to come openly to Jesus at the first with his boldness in coming openly at the last.
3. **The Nature of the Tomb:** It was a borrowed tomb. Christ did not need it in perpetuity, but only for three nights. That tomb is just like the Tomb that awaits every Christian – borrowed only. No man had ever been buried in this Tomb. *“And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock:”* The

Tomb was as secure as man could make it – hewn out of a rock with only one entrance. Jesus died between two thieves, and was buried in a rich man's grave as Isaiah had foretold seven hundred years earlier: *“And 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.”* (Isaiah 53:9)

It is almost humorous to see the manner in which the priests and Pharisees hoped to prevent the Son of the Living God from arising from the grave; *62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”* Make the Tomb as sure as man can do, it will never prevent the almighty God from bursting through stone, steel, or sea to complete His Will. Can a Roman seal stay the Hand of God. Wait until the Third Day! *“Be Still and KNOW that I am God!”* (Psalms 46:10) *“ . . . weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* (Psalms 30:5)