

The One Who Conquered Death

John 19:38-42

Part 2

Christ told His disciples in **John 14:19**, “**After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you shall live also.**” This is the hope of every believer. Or in other words, it is the hope that even if we were to die we would one day, because of Christ’s mastery over death, live again not in agony but in the blessedness of His presence.

Can this hope help us to get through the ups and downs of this life? How could we not! This life, no matter what we may experience in it, is simply a stepping-stone to something better. For we know that whatever we may experience in this life is simply a stepping stone to something far better, the blessedness of Christ’s presence.

Can we count on this? Absolutely! This is what Christ promised us and we can trust this promise. Why? We can trust this promise because He has so convincingly demonstrated His power over death.

And it is this thought that has brought us back to our study of the Gospel of John and more specifically to **John 19:30** to **John 20:10** where the Apostle John records us in great detail how Christ did in fact manifest His power over death.

In fact, in this passage Christ’s power over death was manifested in three different ways (John 19:30–20-10). So, what was the first way that we saw last week that we saw Christ’s power manifested?

Christ’s power over death was first of all manifested in His dying (John 19:30-37). And where did we see this in our text? We saw it last week in **John 19:30-37**. And how did we see Christ’s power over death, in respect to His dying, manifested in these verses?

First of all, we saw Christ’s power over death, in respect to His dying, manifested in **John 19:30** when He gave permission for death to take Him. So let me read this verse for you one more time. “**Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine** [in other words, when Jesus knew that

everything that needed to be done had been done], **He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”**

Clearly death was not calling the shots in respect to whether Christ would die or not die. Christ was calling the shots. And why was this? He was calling the shots because He was death’s master. Death had no control over Christ. Therefore if Christ were going to die it would be because Christ chose to die.

But this was not the only way that Christ’s power over death was manifested in His dying in **John 19:30-37**. We also saw it manifested in the timing of His death beginning in **verse 31** down to **verse 37**. When Christ gave death permission to take His spirit in **John 19:30** it had to be at the precise moment that Christ had dictated based on the words of John in **John 19:31-37**.

If death had not taken Christ’s spirit at the precise moment that Christ had dictated it would have meant that certain Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ would not have been fulfilled.

What do I mean by this? This is what I mean. If death had not taken Christ at the precise moment Christ had dictated then Christ would have lingered on the cross. If Christ had lingered on the cross, based on **John 19:30-37**, certain Roman soldiers under the direction of Pilate and with the encouragement of the Jewish leaders, finding Christ alive on the cross, would have broken His bones and if that had happened they would not have then felt it necessary to pierce His side with a spear.

Would these things have been a problem? Absolutely? If Jesus bones had been broken it would have contradicted **Psalms 34:20** and if Jesus side had not been pieced it would have contradicted **Zechariah 12:10**.

So now let us take a moment to review what we have already covered. Christ’s power over death in **John 19:30–20:10** is manifested in three different ways. And what was the first way that we have seen Christ’s power over death manifested? We have seen it manifested first of all in His dying. And how did we see His power over death manifested in His dying? We saw Christ’s power of death manifested in His dying first of all by the fact that death could not take Christ’s life without His permission and secondly death

could not take Christ's life, once Christ gave permission, anytime it pleased. Rather what we have seen is that death had to take Christ at the very precise moment that Christ had dictated. But we are not yet done. There is a second way that we see Christ's power over death manifested in **John 19:30 -20:10**.

Christ's power over death was also manifested in His burial (John 19:38-42). Why would I say this? I would say this because the burial of Christ as described by the Apostle John in **John 19:38-42** clearly communicates, by the details that John records, that Christ's burial though rushed was not haphazard. In fact, the burial of Christ had been very carefully planned in eternity past and had amazingly unfolded just as it had been foretold.

And who gets the credit for this? As we consider the details of John's account the only person that I believe that could possibly give the credit for this is Christ! Who even though He was physically dead was able, while in the presence of His father in glory, to make sure that what had been foretold about His burial was in fact fulfilled.

So now let me read John's account of the burial of Christ and see if this is not so. **"After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. (39) Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. (40) So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. (41) Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. (42) Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."** So, what do we see in these details concerning Christ's burial that highlights for us the power of Christ over death?

What we see is this. Not only did Christ manifest His power over death by controlling the details of His dying, but He also manifested His power over death by controlling the details of His burial thus making sure that not only prophecies concerning His dying would be fulfilled but also the prophecies concerning His burial as well. So how many prophecies were there?

Christ, in controlling the details of His burial, fulfilled two specific prophecies. So, what are those two prophecies?

The first prophecy that Christ was able to fulfill was that He, according to Isaiah 53:9, would be assigned to a rich man in His death (Isaiah 53:9).

Let me read this passage for you. Speaking of the coming Messiah it says this, **“His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death.”** So, what does this mean?

The wicked men of **Isaiah 53:9** clearly was referring to the two thieves that died with Christ on either side of Him. But how did Jesus become connected to a rich man in His death? This certainly would be a very difficult prophecy to fulfill in light of the fact that Christ had just died on the cross as a malefactor and all of His disciples whom He had chosen had fled. It doesn't seem like a great formula for Christ to get connected with a rich man in His death.

But Christ made it happen and the Apostle John in sharing with us the details of Christ's burial in **John 19:38-42** explains to us how He did it.

But this is not the only prophecy that was fulfilled. There was a second prophecy. The second prophecy that Christ also was able to fulfill was that He, according to Matthew 12:40, would be in the grave exactly three days (Matthew 12:40). Let me read for you the words of Christ in **Matthew 12:40. “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”**

So, what needed to happen to make sure that this prophecy was fulfilled in respect to Christ's burial? This is what needed to happen. Christ's body would have to be removed from the cross, prepared for burial, and placed in the tomb prior to sundown on the day of preparation, which would be counted as one day. He then would have to remain in the grave the whole Sabbath, which would be counted as the second day and then rise on Sunday, which would be counted as the third day. Of course the trick was getting Him in the tomb before the Sabbath started. And this of course certainly was not going to be easy. But it was necessary and it was something that Christ in managing the details of His burial would have to accomplish and He did.

Praise God! And I would hope that as we examine these verses this morning and see His complete mastery over death that we might once again be reminded of the fact that because of His complete mastery over death and in light of His promise to us in **John 14:19** that we can know with complete certainty that even though we may die we will live again.

So now let us take a look at **John 19:38-42** and see how Christ working through Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus was able to orchestrate the details of His burial in such a way that the two prophecies concerning His burial were fulfilled.

So let us begin by looking at **John 19:38**. “**After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body.**” So who is Joseph of Arimathea?

Joseph of Arimathea, according to Matthew 23:57, was a rich man. This fact certainly is intriguing in light of the prophecy of **Isaiah 53.9**, but even though it is intriguing it is also complicated in light of other things we know about Joseph. And what were those things? First of all, not only was Joseph of Arimathea a rich man but Joseph of Arimathea, according to Mark 15:43, was also a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. And what do we know about the Sanhedrin? They were the sworn enemies of Christ and had purposed together to destroy Christ by seeking His condemnation in a Roman court. So let me ask you this question. Did Joseph of Arimathea support this action? No!

Joseph of Arimathea, according to Luke 23:51, did not support the decision of the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus. Why didn't he? He didn't support the decision because Joseph of Arimathea, according to John 19:38, was a disciple of Christ. This I believe was the reason why Joseph did not support the decision of the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus. But certainly he didn't oppose it. How do we know this? We know this because of something else that John tells us in **verse 38**.

Joseph of Arimathea, though a Disciple of Christ, was out of fear of the Jews a secret disciple until Christ's death (John 19:38). Therefore this rich man, a member of the Sanhedrin, though called by John a disciple of Christ, had

been very careful out of fear of the Jews to keep this hidden. And this becomes very clear to us by what John chose to highlight for us here in **John 19:38**. And I believe this has a significant implication.

And what is that implication? The implication is this: Joseph, prior to the death of Christ and the action that John is about to describe, was in fact simply a superficial disciple and was not a true disciple in a saving sense, very much like Judas.

However, this all changed after Christ died. And it is this change that John now explains to us in **John 19:38**. So let us go back once again to **John 19:38**. **“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.”** When Joseph asked permission to take Christ’s body away he was for the first time choosing not to serve Himself but Christ.

Let me ask you this question. Was this action by Joseph of Arimathea in seeking the body of Jesus risky in terms of His stature among the Jews and his own political career? Absolutely! But he now, for the first time, cared more about serving Christ than he did in serving himself.

So, according to **Mark 15:43**, he gathered up his courage and marched into Pilate’s court and asked Pilate for permission to take away the body of Jesus! Hallelujah! What an amazing thing!

What Joseph was unwilling to do for Christ when Christ was living he was now willing to do after Christ had died. Amazing! Incredible! Unbelievable!

How can this be explained? What could possibly have possessed him? How could this man who had chosen not to publicly identify himself with Christ while Christ was living now after Christ had been crucified by the Romans and deserted by His own disciples now choose to do this? How do we explain this? This is how it is explained.

While Christ was in the presence of His Father and while His dead lifeless body was still hanging on the cross He reached down and touched the heart of Joseph and changed Him. He might have been physically dead but death

certainly did seem to diminish Christ's activity. Death had no power over Him.

There is really no other explanation. The change that occurred in Joseph of Arimathea was clearly the work of Christ. But why did Christ wait until this moment to do this? I believe that Christ waited until this moment to do this because it was at this moment that Christ needed Joseph to do certain things in order to fulfill the two prophecies that I mentioned earlier. In other words, if Christ was going to be assigned with a rich man in His death according to **Isaiah 53:9** and if Christ was, in fact, going to be in the grave exactly three days starting with the day of preparation as Christ prophesied in **Matthew 12:40**, then Christ needed Joseph of Arimathea to get some things done.

So what happened next? What happened after Pilate granted the request of Joseph of Arimathea? It might seem as if after being granted permission by Pilate to take away the body of Jesus, as Pilate in fact did in **John 19:38**, that Joseph would have immediately gone to the cross and would have taken down the body.

But this is not what happened. Rather what happened was this. Joseph of Arimathea, according to **Mark 15:46**, after securing permission from Pilate to take away the body of Christ went and bought linen so that he might wrap the body.

But isn't this kind of a strange? Let me ask you something. According to Jewish custom would Joseph of Arimathea have been able to give Jesus a proper burial if He only had linen at His disposal in order to wrap the body? No! Linen by itself would not been enough. He also needed spices. So where are they going to come from?

So now let me read for you **John 19:39**. "**Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.**" Clearly Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were working together in order to expedite the burial of Christ so that He might be buried before the Sabbath began. Who brought the linen? Joseph! Who brought the spices? Nicodemus!

So, what were the spices he brought? He brought myrrh and aloes. Myrrh was a fragrant, gummy resin, which in powdered form was often mixed with

aloes, an aromatic powder made from Sandalwood. And how much did these spices weigh? John tells us that they weighed a hundred pounds. The hundred pounds far exceeded what would be used in a normal burial and certainly would have cost a proverbial king's ransom, which is exactly what I believe is clearly what he wanted to communicate by his action.

Was this surprising that Nicodemus all of a sudden would become so demonstrably public in respect to His allegiance to Christ? No! Absolutely not! Just as Joseph had managed to hide in the shadows up to this particular time so had Nicodemus. They both, up to this time, I believe, had been secret disciples or superficial disciples. But things have changed. Christ has reached down at this point in time and had touched their hearts thus once again manifesting His mastery over death. So what happened next?

After Joseph and Nicodemus had brought the linen and spices they then prepared Christ's body for burial (John 19:40). Let me read for you **John 19:40.** And what does it say? It says this, **“So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of Jews.”** Notice the word “bound.” Obviously, though they clearly at this time were demonstrating themselves to be true disciples of Christ in spite of His death or perhaps better said because of His death, they still clearly did not believe in the resurrection. If they had they certainly would not have bound Him as they were now doing.

But now where are they going to put Him? Let me now read for you **John 19:41-42.** **“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. (42) Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”**

So now let me ask this very important question. Whose tomb was it? The tomb that was used to bury Christ was the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea according to Matthew 27:60. And why was His tomb selected? It was selected because it was close by and would allow them to place Christ's body in the tomb on the day of preparation and therefore prior to the Sabbath.

When Christ's body was placed in the Joseph's of Arimathea's tomb on the day of preparation prior to the Sabbath the prophecies of Isaiah 53:9 and Matthew 12:40 were fulfilled.

What an amazing thing. Christ, while in heaven with His Father and while His dead and lifeless body was hanging on the cross, reached down and touched the hearts of two very superficial so-called disciples and moved them to publicly take a stand.

Does Christ have complete mastery over death? Absolutely! We have seen His complete mastery over death in respect to the details of His dying and now we have seen His complete mastery over death in respect to the details of His burial. Is Christ's promise to us that even if we die we will live again sure? Absolutely!

Therefore, may God give us the grace to understand that Christ does in fact have complete mastery over death, and though we may die, based on His promise to us, we will live again.