

So That You May Believe
John 19:31-42/#thegospelofjohn

Have you ever witnessed a full-fledged miracle? A supernatural intervention in the affairs of man? A time when God did something that could not be explained by coincidence or any other man-made explanation?

Maybe it was physical or emotional healing or restoration of a marriage or a perfectly timed out deliverance that doesn't happen in the regular course and trajectory of life. You experienced a divine intervention and as a result it has marked you forever.

The young Apostle John at the foot of the cross must have asked himself many times why he was there and why he had to endure the horror of his Rabbi on the cross. Why couldn't he have stayed in hiding like the others?



Roughly 30 years after this scene, the Apostle John writes his Gospel and he knew why he had needed to be there. John needed to be there because people were going to say that Jesus actually didn't die on the cross and He certainly didn't rise from the dead. The story of the bodily resurrection of Jesus the Nazarene is so shocking and overwhelming, it is difficult to fit into any worldview. No individual or culture has a comfortable way of looking at a world which allows someone to be crucified on a Friday, thoroughly dead and buried and then alive again on Sunday. Why did the young Apostle John have to stand at the foot of the cross?

**John witnessed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
His testimony is true so that you may believe.**

³¹ Then, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not stay on the crosses on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was an especially important one), the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have the victims' legs broken and the bodies taken down. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified with Jesus, first the one and then the other. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out immediately. ³⁵ And the person who saw it has testified (and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth), so that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled, "Not a bone of his will be broken." ³⁷ And again another scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced." (John 19:31-37)

The Judeans wanted the bodies taken down because it was Passover time. Friday was about to end and Sabbath was about to begin. Romans would have been content to allow the body to sit out and rot, but not the Jews. To leave Jesus' corpse exposed would be unacceptable and Deuteronomy 21:23 declares the cursed one on the tree must be taken down and buried or it would defile the Holy Land God had given them.

The Jews asked Pilate to have the crucified taken down, but the problem was that the crucified often remained alive or half alive for some time, even a few days. As it is well documented, crucifixion was designed to torture. Suspended by the arms, you couldn't breathe, so you would push up on your legs in order to take a breath. If it wasn't for the impending Sabbath, the prisoners may have continued until they ran out of strength and suffocated. So to expedite the process, what would you do? Roman soldiers were known for their brutality and they would expedite the process by breaking the legs and thus keep the one on the cross from pressing down onto their legs to get breaths.

That's what they did to the criminal on the left and right, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. Maybe he was faking it and no Roman soldier would let a condemned criminal escape death. So, just to be sure, he stuck his spear hard up into Jesus' ribs. Either it would kill him or it would prove he was already dead.

The medical significance of the blood and water has been debated. Did the spear penetrate the pericardium? Was the heart ruptured already? Was there a fatal cardiac attack? The important fact is that the medical evidence supports that Jesus did die a physical death.

"Not a bone of his will be broken" (vs. 36)	"They will look on the one whom they have pierced (vs. 37)
John points out: "Not a bone of his will be broken", which heeds to the Passover regulations that no bone of the lamb should be broken (Ex. 12:46, Numbers 9:12). Jesus is the true Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7) and as the lambs are being killed that weekend in the Temple, Jesus himself is on the cross as the true, innocent, mediating Passover lamb taking away the sin of the world.	The second fulfilled Scripture comes from this dramatic scene in Zechariah 12. Zechariah describes this scene where the nations of the earth will make their last frantic effort to destroy Israel, but instead Israel is rescued. They will lift their eyes to the east, to the Mount of Olives, and Messiah will put his feet down on that mountain and it will split in half from the east to the west, leaving a great valley (Zech. 14:4). Revival, grace, prayer and supplication will occur and they will recognize that the Lamb of God on the cross, the one whom they have pierced, is the conquering God and Messiah (Acts 2:22-24, Zech. 12:10) Zechariah says a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the people of Jerusalem, a fountain which will cleanse them from sin and impurity (13:1).

³⁸ After this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (but secretly, because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he went and took the body away. ³⁹ Nicodemus, the man who had previously come to Jesus at night, accompanied Joseph, carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰ Then they took Jesus' body and wrapped it, with the aromatic spices, in strips of linen cloth according to Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹ Now at the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb where no one had yet been buried. ⁴² And so, because it was the Jewish day of preparation and the tomb was nearby, they placed Jesus' body there. (John 19:38-42)

We haven't met Joseph before in John's Gospel, but according to the Synoptics, he owned the tomb (Matt 27:60, Isaiah 53:9) and was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, waiting for the kingdom of God (Matthew 27:60, Mark 15:43 Isaiah 53:9). His tomb had never been used before.

We have met Nicodemus before (3:1-10, 7:50-52). It was during Nicodemus' night time visit that Jesus explains to him, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (3:6). New life, Holy Spirit life, comes from above and whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life (3:16). We see glimpses of Nicodemus' faith when he stood up for Jesus among the other Pharisees and was mocked (7:50-52). These two members of the Sanhedrin weren't supposed to handle dead bodies - it would make them unclean for a week (Numbers 19:11). They brought 75 pounds of spices, a hundred times the amount that Mary had poured over Jesus in Bethany (12:3).

Consider yourself alive to God in Christ Jesus!

As we draw near to the resurrection narrative in John recounting the turning point of all history - the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ - it's important for you to understand *why* Jesus died and was buried and rose from the dead. Romans 6 says that Jesus' death became our death, Jesus' crucifixion our crucifixion, Jesus' curse on the cross our curse on the cross and Jesus' resurrection, our resurrection.

Because of Christ, His death, burial and resurrection, salvation is about our destiny and new life as new creations in Him. Jesus' goal is for us to be released into His dreams for us and our destiny. Paul says it's not about sin and death anymore, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him...So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Rom 6:8, 11).

As Jesus humbly embraced His destiny, what is one way you can humbly accept and walk in your Christ ordained destiny this week?