As we think about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, this morning, and focus our thoughts on that great event, I want you to turn to John Chapter 19, starting at verse 30 and down through verse 10 of Chapter 20. This, of course, is just the narrative of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and it is that very narrative that I want us to focus our attention on as we think about this great event this morning.

Death, of course, is the most certain fact about life, and death terrifies people more than anything else. That is why death has come to be known as the King of Terrors. That is why in the book of Hebrews, the writer tells us that, "It is the fear of death that has held men in bondage all their life long." Scripture tells us that death produces fear in every heart, a fear that is enslaving. A fear from which there seems no escape. Apart from, of course, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are people, and we're among them, who say, "To die is gain." Who say, "O, death, where is your sting? Where is your victory?" Some might ask if that's a realistic perspective, if that's some kind of mind game to somehow get around paralyzing anxiety when we think about death, but it isn't. It is rational, and reasonable, and right to look forward to death, with anticipation.

Death should have no fear, no terror for us, and the reason is because there is the death conqueror. And that wonderful verse in [John 14:19](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2014.19), where Jesus said, "Because I live, you too shall live also," is what takes the sting out of death. It was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who rescues us from the fear of the grave. He is the one, who in dying, destroyed death. He has removed death's sting, conquered its terror, and caused us to look at death not as a disaster, but as a friend, who ushers us into the presence of God and into eternal glory.

All through his life, Jesus claimed divine power. Power to [heal](http://www.gty.org.uk/resources/sermons/80-140) the sick, power to cast out demons, power to raise the dead, and not only to raise men and women who had died, but power to raise himself. And he said that, he claimed that. He claimed to have complete power over his own life and death, to be able to control and conquer death, not only for others, but for Himself. And because of Him, death has become, itself, a victim. We will also see the greatest hope of the human heart, that because He conquered death, we shall live also.

I want us to look at three features in this text. His death, His burial, and His resurrection. And I want you to see how they demonstrate His tremendous power over life and death, and they demonstrate that He was, indeed, the promised Messiah, because they fulfil specific prophecy. So, here you have the fulfillment of prophecy, and at the same time, the demonstration of the power and the glory of Jesus Christ.

In this marvellous passage of Scripture, looking at His dying and looking at His burial and looking at His resurrection, opens up for us the clearest possible testimony, that this is, in fact, God in human flesh. He is deity, He is Messiah, He is majesty. It also proves to us that He has the power of life in Himself, which power He has promised to us.

Now, before we look at the text itself, just one general comment. There were at least 28 specific old testament prophecies were fulfilled. They were written anywhere from a thousand to 500 years before Christ came, and He fulfils them perfectly. In fact, almost all of them are fulfilled within a 24 hour period, leading up to His crucifixion. Again, reminding us the He was the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the one prepared by God, sent by God, who specifically fulfilled the prophecies that God had ordained in the Old Testament. We're only going to see a few of those, but they are enough to convince us about who this Jesus really was, and to show us His power over death, which becomes our hope.

Let's look, first of all, at His dying, and we see that staring in verse 30 and running down through verse 37. And before we look at that, let me just say in general that the fear of death is basically bound up in the unexpected. The reason we fear death is because the surprise element is there. It is a surprise, in terms of when it will come, and it is a surprise in terms of what it will deliver. Since people don't die and come back, although some purport to do so, we really don't know what to expect. Apart from the divine revelation of Scripture, we are utterly in the dark. Man cannot reach beyond his life and understand what comes in the future. And it is the surprise, it is the unknown of death that makes it so fearful and so foreboding. That really is death's chain, that keeps men bound. Death alone knows its moment. Death alone knows its pathway. Death alone knows what it brings. The most we know, apart from Scripture, is that we will die. How we will die, we may not know. When we will die, we do not know. It is true that many suicides result from the fear of death's surprise, and there are people who are so fearful of the unexpectedness of death, that they will kill themselves to rob death of its fear hold on them.

Death may mess up everything. It usually does. It comes before we're ready. Things are never in order. All isn't ready, everything isn't done. Death is a shocker. It is a robber, it is a thief. We didn't get the will written. We didn't get the estate planned. We didn't forgive that friend. We didn't say, "I love you," enough. We didn't make things right with that child. We didn't fulfill our hopes, our dreams never came to pass. We didn't finish the symphony. And that's how death is, and that's how death comes to us. But that is not how death came to Jesus.

In the tenth chapter of John, verse 17, Jesus said, "For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from my Father." There was nothing of the element of surprise in the death of Jesus. No one took His life from him, not even God. God asked of Him, that he would give His life, and He willingly agreed. And certainly not Satan, who is the one who holds the power of death, and consequently, the fear over us. He controlled His death completely. There was no element of surprise, no one, not God, not Satan, took His life from Him.

Look at verse 30. "When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed His head and gave up His spirit." He cried those marvellous words, "It is finished," one word in the Greek Tetelestai, shouting for all men to hear through all the ages, that the work of redemption had been done. Sins, wages had been paid. The justice of God had been satisfied. Atonement had been accomplished. The task was done, salvation won, Satan defeated, sin destroyed. And Jesus had full knowledge of all of that. He knew every specific detail of the plan of God had been fulfilled. Each prophecy had been completed. He had said what needed to be said. He had done what needed to be done. And then, wilfully, he pillowed His head and gave up His spirit. It is not the death of a victim, it is the death of a victor.

And we see in that, that He controlled His own dying. It was no surprise. Death had, by the way, tried for Him on many other occasions. Satan had tried to kill Him numerous times throughout His life, even at the very time of His birth, with the massacre of the babies in Bethlehem, and it never really relented through His whole life. But always unsuccessfully, Satan attempted that, because the death of Jesus was in His own control. He would not die until it was His hour to die, until everything had been accomplished.

In fact, you look back at verse 28, and you read after this, Jesus knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty," and then came the sour wine, and then came his voluntary death. It's important for us to notice that, that He is the master of death. He is death's master. The fact that He died when He did was strategic to many prophecies, and it was strategic to identifying Him as the King of Life, who had power over death.

Now, He died about three o'clock, really very soon for someone who had been crucified. Do you know that many people who were crucified lingered as long as three days on the cross? And Jesus was only there for hours. The thieves, unquestionably, less strong than Jesus, and likely scourged less severely, if scourged at all, lived longer than He. They suffered some pain. We don't know if they were as viciously scourged as Jesus. They may well have been. But it seems as though there was a particular animosity towards Jesus that perhaps made the lashes more severe. But the thieves who were weaker in constitution than Jesus, because of His own perfection, Jesus must have been a man beyond men. They lasted longer on the cross then Jesus did. And the explanation is the Jesus gave up His life. He went when He was ready. He commanded death to take him because he was on a divine schedule, and He had to fulfil some prophecy.

Look at verse 31. "The Jews, therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away." Now, notice it says it was the day of preparation. That is the day before Passover, before Sabbath, and it was not just an ordinary Sabbath, like a lot of Sabbaths, like most Sabbaths. It was a high day. What that means is, it was not just a Sabbath, it was Passover Sabbath. And consequently, it had a sacredness above all other Sabbaths. And the Jews, very much aware that the next day was such a holy day, wanted those dead bodies, or wanted those bodies, I should say, removed before the Sabbath began. This priority reeks with hypocrisy, obviously. Its stench, frankly, is nauseous. Here are these fools who have literally killed the son of the living God. They have rejected the reality of their own Messiah. They have denied God. They are blasphemers of the worst rank, and yet, they are scrupulously sure to maintain the form of their religion.

They did not give chapter and verse for their request, but it is likely that they had in mind a passage back in Deuteronomy, Chapter 21, where it says in verses 22 and 23, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day, so that you do not defy your land." And perhaps it was that text that they had used to apply to this particular moment in time, and they didn't want the land defiled on the Sabbath. They wanted to be sure they kept the law of God while killing the one who came to fulfil it. This is the hypocrisy that is exhibited. It was getting late in the afternoon, and you remember Sabat, or Sabbath, begins at sundown. And it was getting late in the afternoon and they wanted to make sure those bodies were down before the six o'clock hour, or around six o'clock, when the sun set.

So, they went to Pilate, and they sought Roman permission to speed up the death of those men on the crosses by smashing their legs. Verse 32 says, "The soldiers, therefore, came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other man that was crucified with him." Now, the reason this was done, is because you die, in crucifixion, through asphyxiation. Remember now, the individual was crucified with his legs bent, and through the wrists, and what would happen would be that the individual hanging on the cross would push himself up by means of his legs, pushing against the nail driven through the arch of the foot, pushing himself up, pushing himself up in order to be able to breathe, so that his body wasn't slumping, hanging on those two nails in his wrists, literally suffocating him in the lungs. And so, the body already ribboned with the whip on the back would slide up and down the rough cross, just to be able to breathe, and eventually, of course, unable to do that, the body would slump, asphyxiation would occur. The lungs would fill up with fluid and death would come. And in order to prevent the victim from staying alive by pushing up and pushing up and being able to breathe, they would come by and smash the legs, and of course, then there would be no pushing and the asphyxiation would come much sooner.

And so, they came by to hasten death, but when they came to Jesus, amazingly, He had already died. It says in verse 33, the coming to Jesus, "When they saw that he was already dead, they did not break His legs." Now, why was He already dead, if He was such a strong individual? It was abnormal to die so early, and again, I remind you that He died at His own discretion, at His own will, and not the pleasure of those that wanted to kill Him. He commanded death to take Him. He yielded up His own spirit, and why? Because that was the plan of God, to fulfil the prophecy and to prove, in fact, that He was God.

Let me tell you about that. It was stated, for example, in the Old Testament, in Numbers, Chapter 9 and verse 12, "That not a bone of the Passover lamb should be broken." In the preparation of the Passover, not a bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken, and Jesus was the perfect fulfilment of the picture of the Passover lamb. But beyond that, which was a picture, there was a prophecy in Psalm 34 and verse 20, it says, "He keeps all His bones, and not one of them is broken." So, Jesus used death to fulfil prophecy.

Look down at verse 36, "For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." [Psalm 34:20](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Psalm%2034.20), "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." Jesus, then, controlled death, so that it would not happen. He used death to fulfill this prophecy and demonstrate that He, in fact, was the promised Messiah, the lamb who's limbs would never be broken.

Furthermore, the Roman soldiers who came by with the mallets to smash the legs of the victims were experts at determining death. That was their stock and trade. They were unbelievers, they had nothing to gain by fabricating the fact that Jesus was dead. In fact, they had been willingly mocking Him and scourging Him, and spitting on Him, and ridiculing Him, and when these Roman experts of death come by, and saw and testified that He was already dead, that is the number one proof that Jesus actually died, and puts to rest theories that say Jesus really never died, He just went into some kind of a semi-coma and was revived by the spices and the coolness of the tomb, and if there was no death, then there was no resurrection.

The soldiers knew a dead man when they saw one, and they testified that He was dead. But so that no doubt would remain whatsoever, verse 34 says, "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately, there came out blood and water." This, too, fulfills prophecy. Look at verse 37, "And again, another Scripture says, they shall look on Him, whom they pierce." That is Zechariah, Chapter 12 and verse 10. The prophet Zechariah said that the Messiah would be pierced, that some day the Jews would look to the one who was pierced and believe. So, again, we see the prophecy fulfilled. Jesus controlling every detail of His dying, showing us that He has the power over death, and that He is the promised Messiah. John says, then, "He saw blood and water come forth immediately," and here is another proof that he was really dead.

Now, to what does this blood and water refer? There has been much discussion about this. The physiological explanation might be that Jesus died from a rupture of the heart, in consequence of great mental agony and sorrow. And that is a reasonable assumption, that he literally died of a ruptured heart, the muscle ruptured because of the immense mental agony. Such a death, medical experts tell us, would be instant and the blood flowing into the pericardium would coagulate into the red clot blood and the limpid serum water, called water here. The blood and water would then be released when the spear was thrust into His side.

[Psalm 69:20](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Psalm%2069.20) says, prophetically, of the Messiah, "Reproach has broken my heart."

And so, perhaps, we can take that literally. His heart literally ruptured. Literally exploded. The anguish of sin, the pain of separation from God burst the heart of the human Jesus, a heart never made to handle that much agony, or that much shame. And even in His dying, with a broken heart, he controlled every detail.

Look at verse 35, then, "And he, who has seen, has borne witness, and his witness is true." And he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. And here is John saying, "I'm writing what is true. I'm witnessing to what is true. I am telling you the truth, so that you may believe." Believe what? Over in Chapter 20, verse 31, "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name." John is saying this is not hearsay, this is not fable, this is not legend. I saw it, I was at the cross, I bore witness. Jesus controlled His own death to fulfill prophecy, and if He hadn't died then, they would have broken His legs, and if they had broken His legs, they would have broken the prophetic word. And if they had broken His legs, that would have assured His soon death, and they would have had no need to pierce His side, and another prophecy would not have come to pass. John says, "I was there. It came to pass exactly the way God said it would." Jesus was not killed by that spear, it only revealed that He was already dead, because He gave His life, right on divine schedule, and demonstrated power over death."

So, you see the deity of Christ. You see His power expressed even in His dying. Let's look secondly at His burial, and just briefly at this, verses 38 and following. Here Jesus exhibits power over death, even when dead. It's one thing to have power over death when you're dying, but something quite beyond that to have power over death when you're dead. But He did. [Isaiah 53:9](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isaiah%2053.9), "The prophet said of the Messiah, His grave was a sign to be with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death." In other words, the Messiah was supposed to be thrown in there with all the wicked men in his death, but it turned out that He would be with a rich man in His death. Common criminals were buried in a place prepared for common criminals. In fact, the Romans didn't even bury them. They simply threw them out for vultures, crows, and scavenger dogs to devour. But the prophet said that Jesus, who's grave was to be with wicked men, would end up being with a rich man.

But how? Certainly, none of the disciples were rich. How could this happen? Verse 38, "And 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. He came, therefore, and took away His body." Jesus, dead now, in body, was still alive in His spirit, and as He was alive in His spirit, He was moving over the heart of a rich man, to fulfill the Scripture. A secret disciple who was wealthy, by the name of Joseph, from Arimathea. Here, Jesus is controlling things from even the posture of His own death. Great insight into who He really was. But here was this man, who was a secret disciple, for fear of the Jews.

Actually, he was a coward. And why, all of a sudden, at the most explosive, potentially deadly period of time in the history of the life of Jesus, would he expose himself, and not only expose himself as a disciple of Jesus to the people around him, but to Pilate, who, of all people, could hold the power of life and death. But he did it, because, of course, Christ moved upon his heart.

The four Gospels tell us a lot about Joseph of Arimathea. He was rich, he was devout, he was good, he was righteous, he was a counselor, he was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was in the trial of Jesus, but perhaps was one who voted no. Because of sinful fear of the Jewish leaders, he had not declared his faith publicly. But now, as the Son of God moves on him to fulfill prophecy, he becomes courageous. He goes to Pilate; he requests the body of Jesus. Mark 15 tells us about that encounter with Pilate. And remember, he's got to act fast, because this body has to be in the grave before sundown.

You say why? Because in Matthew 12, in verse 40, the Scripture said, and of course, we find it reaching back to use Jonah as an analogy, that Jesus had to be in the grave three days and three nights. Now, that doesn't mean three full, 24 hour periods. To the Jews, a day and a night was a term that designated any part of a 24 hour day. A 24 hour period has both a day and a night in it, in terms of dark and light, and the Jews spoke of a day as a day and a night. We call it a day; they call it a day and a night. Any part of that would constitute a day and a night. We might say, "I'm going to be gone for three days." You might be gone only several hours of one day, a full day, and a few hours of the next day, but when you say three days, we understand what you mean.

And so, this is very, very important, because in order for Him to be in the grave part - any part of three different day and night periods, He has to get into that grave before sundown, so that Friday will count as one of the three. This all in the plan of God, then, the Lord must move quickly on the heart of Joseph, quickly on the heart of Pilate. The action must take place very rapidly, and it does.

Nicodemus verse 39, having come and taken away the body quickly, before the Sabbath, and the Jews would assist him in doing that, since they wanted it done, Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night, back in John 3, and Nicodemus also, in addition to Joseph of Arimathea, had become a follower of Jesus Christ, no doubt converted in the conversation of John 3. He brings a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. That is a lot of spices, and that would be what amount would be used to anoint the body of a king or some great, wealthy, wealthy individual. And we meet here, in addition to Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, who counted the cost, chose Christ, and was willing to step out. Two secret disciples, the Lord has moved on their hearts, and they boldly step forward in order to make sure prophecy is fulfilled, and the Son of God is in the grave a portion of three different days.

Verse 40 says they took the body of Jesus, bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. We also know, by the way, that some women assisted them, and what they would do would be just to take some linen and wrap the body, and as they wrapped, just sprinkle in this mixture of myrrh and aloes. It was a fragrance; it minimized the terrible stench of a decaying body. They did not embalm. The Jews did not put any kind of fluid inside the body. They did not drain the blood. They simply used this kind of mixture. This was lavish amount, though, and was intended to minimize, of course, the stench of the rotting flesh, and tells you, well, perhaps, they were doubtful about the resurrection. We can assume that by Road to Emmaus attitude. But anyway, they went on with this particular operation, and the way it was done, the body was wrapped, and as it was being wrapped, this mixture was poured in, and the head would be wrapped separately from the body, and this was done, bound as the burial custom of the Jews dictated.

And then in verse 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." Jesus borrows a tomb, and again, I think this is probably related to the hurry of getting Him into this tomb before sundown, so that Sabbath doesn't start. Therefore, on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. Every tiny detail orchestrated to accomplish God's purpose. Everything done speedily. Three o'clock in the afternoon, you've got only a few hours to make that day count. If that day is missed, the whole prophetic plan falls through, and you can look at the Scripture and say it doesn't always come to pass, and therefore, it isn't the Word of God. The women actually came back, by the way, on Sunday, to finish the job with more spices, only to find out that He was gone. They couldn't come before Sunday, because they couldn't come on the Sabbath.

That takes us to the third aspect of this text, and really, the climax of it all, in Chapter 20, the resurrection, and you see again here, how Jesus controls every detail of His dying, of His burial, and even of His resurrection, in order to fulfil prophecy. And here is the ultimate power over death. Remember back in Psalm 16, the prophecy of the resurrection is given as explicitly as any place. I'll just read it to you.

"Therefore, my heart is glad, my glory rejoices, my flesh also will dwell securely, then this. Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol, that neither wilt thou allow thy holy one to undergo decay. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life." I won't stay in the grave, I won't decay, I will come out of the grave following the path of life. That's the promise that Messiah would rise.

Verse 1, "On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb." She came back, by the way, to complete what was a very hurried burial. Of course, she couldn't do it on the Sabbath, but when she got there, the stone was rolled back. Back in [Matthew 27:66](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matthew%2027.66), it says that the Romans had made the grave secure. Along with a guard, they set a seal on the stone. But Chapter 28, verse 2 says a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it, and His appearance was like lightning. The stone was rolled back. Now, she may have thought that the Jews had taken His body for further indignities, or some ghoulish people had robbed the grave, but the tomb was empty.

Verse 2, she ran to came to Simon Peter, and the other disciple to whom Jesus loved and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they've laid Him." She assumes he's still dead, just removed. Great love, weak faith. Verse 3, "Peter went forth and the other disciple and they were going to the tomb, and they were in a hurry." Verse 4 says they were running together and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first. John arrives first, but John is a little more hesitant. Peter is brash, stopping - John stops in verse 5, looks in, and he sees a remarkable thing, the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Fear, fear not only of the unknown, but fear of some horrible reality having occurred with regard to his Lord, kept him at the door. Simon Peter, therefore, also came following him, and entered the tomb. You would expect that, just booms right past John, right in, and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So that the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed.

No robbers would have unwrapped Him. And if they, for some reason, someone had unwrapped Him, they would have unwrapped Him in a great hurry, and there would have been a sheaf of cloth thrown recklessly somewhere in that tomb. But what they saw was the linen wrappings, wrapped and lying exactly as they were, and the napkin that had wrapped the head lying exactly as it was in the cave. What had happened was, Jesus had just come out of them. He had just come out of them. And that was all they needed to see. And they believed, and it is not easy to believe in a resurrection, especially when you don't expect it. Especially when you have been told that somebody stole the body. But there was enough evidence in the cloth that these two hard-headed, skeptical, fearful, wondering disciples believed. And what did they believe? They believed that He rose from the dead, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. They believed.

And this is amazing. Versus 9 and 10, "They believed, though as yet they did not understand the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead." They did not understand the significance of Psalm 16, or Psalm 110, or Psalm 118, or Isaiah 53. They didn't understand the Messianic prophecies. But they believed purely on the basis of what they saw. Later, it all came clear, when the Holy Spirit came, and made everything clear. But just the grave clothes were enough.

What about you? You have the Old Testament. You have the New Testament. You have the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles who wrote the New Testament. You have resurrection evidence that's unending. The testimony of 500 eyewitnesses who saw the one time, of the disciples who met Him in the upper room, when He came through the wall. The testimony of the disciples who saw Him, that touched Him, and saw Him descend into Heaven. The testimony of their martyrdom, the testimony of the living Church, the experience of Christians. There is so much proof. There may be no event in the history of the world with as much eyewitness evidence, out of antiquity, as this.

Do you believe? Do you really believe? If you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, Paul said in Romans 10, "You shall be saved." Saved from your sin. And that's to conquer death. That's the whole issue. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as Lord and Saviour, and to be forgiven your sin, is to conquer death. Jesus had said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live, even if he dies." So, to believe in Him, is to live eternally, and to be able to say, "O, death, where is your victory? O, death, where is your sting?" To believe in Jesus Christ and to believe in His resurrection, to believe that He died for you and rose again is to conquer death.