

Luke 23:53

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

Analysis

And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. Joseph's burial of Jesus is described in three careful actions. First, **he took it down** (καθελὼν αὐτό, kathelōn auto)—Joseph removed Jesus's body from the cross. The verb kathaireo (καθαιρέω) means to take down, remove, or lower. This required physical effort and likely assistance (John 19:39 mentions Nicodemus helped, bringing 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes). Removing crucifixion victims involved extracting nails, handling the bloodied corpse, and treating the body with dignity despite its disfigurement.

Second, **wrapped it in linen** (ἐνετύλιξεν αὐτὸ σινδόνι, enetylixen auto sindoni). Entylissō (ἐντυλίσσω) means to wrap, enfold, or wind around. Sindōn (σινδών) refers to fine linen cloth, expensive fabric used for burial shrouds by the wealthy. Matthew 27:59 specifies it was 'clean linen'—ritually pure, befitting burial. Joseph's provision of expensive linen honored Jesus and fulfilled prophecy about the rich man's tomb. The wrapping was temporary—the women planned to return after Sabbath to anoint the body properly with spices (Luke 23:56, 24:1).

Third, **laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid** (ἔθηκεν αὐτὸ ἐν μνήματι λαξευτῷ, οὐκ οὐδεὶς οὕπω κείμενος, ethēken auto en mnēmati laxeutō, hou ouk ēn oudeis oupō keimenos). Mnēma (μνῆμα) means tomb or memorial; laxeutos (λαξευτός) means hewn from

rock, carved out. Such tombs were expensive, carved into limestone hillsides with rolling stone doors. That it was Joseph's own new tomb is stated in Matthew 27:60. The detail **wherein never man before was laid** emphasizes the tomb's newness and purity—no decay, no prior use. This fulfilled the pattern of sacred purposes requiring unused items (new rope for Samson, unridden colt for Jesus's entry). It also proved no other body could be mistaken for Jesus at the resurrection.

Historical Context

Jewish burial customs in first-century Palestine followed specific protocols. The body was washed, wrapped in linen strips with aromatic spices between layers, and the face covered with a separate cloth (John 20:7). Burial occurred quickly, ideally within 24 hours, especially before Sabbath. The wealthy were buried in family tombs—cave-like chambers hewn from rock, with shelves or niches for multiple bodies. Rolling stones sealed the entrance, protecting from animals and grave robbers.

Joseph's tomb was located in a garden near Golgotha (John 19:41)—convenient for quick burial before Sabbath. Rock-hewn tombs were expensive, reflecting Joseph's wealth. That he donated his personal tomb for Jesus demonstrates his honor and affection. The tomb's newness fulfilled Isaiah 53:9 precisely: 'with the rich in his death' (בְּמַתָּה, bemotav, literally 'in his deaths,' possibly meaning the tomb designed for Joseph's eventual death).

The tomb's location and newness also served apologetic purposes. Enemies couldn't claim disciples stole the wrong body, or that Jesus's resurrection was actually someone else rising. The tomb was known, guarded (Matthew 27:62-66), and sealed. Early Christian proclamation insisted on the empty tomb—not merely visions or spiritual resurrection, but bodily resurrection from a known, verifiable location. Joseph's tomb became central to resurrection evidence. Archaeological discoveries around Jerusalem have revealed similar first-century rock-hewn tombs, some with rolling stone doors, confirming Gospel descriptions' historical accuracy.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the detail that Joseph used his own new tomb demonstrate the depth of his devotion to Jesus?
2. What theological significance does the tomb's newness (never before used) carry for understanding Jesus's burial and resurrection?
3. How do the specific details of Jesus's burial refute later claims that the resurrection was myth or hallucination?

Interlinear Text

καὶ καθελὼν αὐτὸν ἐνετύλιξεν αὐτὸν σινδόνι τοι εἴθηκεν

And	down	it	and wrapped	it	in linen	And	laid
G2532	G2507	G846	G1794	G846	G4616	G2532	G5087

αὐτὸν ἐν μνήματι λαξευτῷ οὐδὲν οὐκ ἦν

it	in	a sepulchre	that was hewn in stone	wherein	never	was
G846	G1722	G3418	G2991	G3757	G3756	G2258

οὐδέπω οὐδεὶς κείμενος

man	before	laid
G3764	G3762	G2749

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 53:9 (Parallel theme): 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.

Mark 15:46 (Parallel theme): And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

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