

Dear Lucy,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked why Jesus was buried in a new, unused tomb.

Jesus owned no tomb or burial place of his own. Isaiah 53:9 says, “He was *assigned* a grave with the wicked, and *with the rich* in his death.” His burial arrangement is attributed in all four Gospels to Joseph of Arimathea, a man of wealth and high social standing. He was apparently a member—most likely a dissenting one—of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council that had condemned Jesus. Described as one who was “looking for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51), Joseph is identified by both Matthew and John as a disciple of Jesus; but the relationship was kept secret according to John. At some risk to himself, Joseph approached Pontius Pilate and asked that Jesus' body be removed from the cross and given to him. Joseph was performing a pious act by obeying the Jewish law that said if a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, the body could not be left on the tree overnight, but must be buried the same day. (See Deuteronomy 21:22-23.) According to John 19:38-42, Joseph and Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin, anointed Jesus' body with myrrh and aloes and wrapped it in a linen shroud. Jesus' body was then placed in a new rock-hewn tomb, which may have been one that Joseph had recently obtained for his family's use, and a stone was rolled against the door.

Jesus told his disciples on at least two occasions that he would be put to death and on the third day he would be raised to life (Matthew 17:23; 20:19, Mark 9:31; 10:34, Luke 9:22; 18:33). Just as Jesus said, He was resurrected on the third day. But his resurrection was spiritual, not physical. God had removed his human remains. Only the linen and burial cloth around Jesus' head remained in the tomb.

You asked why Jesus was buried in a new, unused tomb. Criminals were often buried in unmarked mass graves. It was high honor to be buried in a new, unused tomb. More importantly, it was necessary so that there could be no doubt in anyone's mind as to the identity of the one who arose. Had other corpses been present in the tomb, doubt may have arisen that it was actually Jesus who was resurrected. But God, in His infinite wisdom, foresaw the need for the clear identification of the risen Messiah as is noted in the prophecy of Isaiah, mentioned above.

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to go to www.christianquestions.net and sign up for CQ Rewind! It is free, without obligation, and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio

