

Why Did Doug and Jana Buy Cemetery Property at Rolling Green?

By Doug Hamilton

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 27:57-60 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

- In the passage above we find a great moment of history, the burial of Jesus in the tomb. In just three short days He would be resurrected from the dead and be forever referred to as Jesus the Christ. The fact that He was entombed in a mausoleum space is the reality of how dead He really was, for He was Graveyard Dead! One cannot be truly resurrected if they cannot be proclaimed dead in the grave. The very definition of the gospel as defined by Paul the apostle is the death, BURIAL and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). It was that power of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that is the basis of all Christianity (Romans 1:4). That is the primary importance of the passage of Matthew 27:57-60.
- A second important point of the passage would be concerning this man named Joseph of Arimathea.
 - He was a prominent member of the Jewish Supreme Court (Mark 15:43) awaiting the Kingdom of God (Luke 23:51). Being a secret disciple of Jesus, he was one of the members of the court that gave disapproval to the execution of Jesus. His calls for a reprieve were not heeded and now his champion was dead. It was in his newly hewn tomb that he would place Jesus.
 - By the way, this was not an afterthought, for it was prophesied in *Isaiah 53:9* “*His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.*” Jesus dealt in the pre-arrangement concept
- That leads me to the topic of this morning’s lesson, for recently Jana and I purchased our burial estate at Rolling Green Cemetery in Camp Hill. This rather morbid thought was actually our anniversary gift to each other. You might ask, “Why did Doug and Jana buy cemetery property at Rolling Green?” I am glad you asked because that is the title of the sermon this morning.

“Why did Doug and Jana buy cemetery property at Rolling Green?”

1) Out of Acceptance of Reality

- The scriptures are very clear concerning the reality of death. Hebrews 9:27 states that “...it is appointed for men to once to die...” and Job 14:5 confirms “*that our days are determined, the number of his months is with God*”. Ecclesiastes 3:2 states that there is “*A time to give birth and a time to die...*” recognizing that death is a natural step following birth into the world. It is what Joshua referred to in Josh 23:13 as “*going the way of all the earth*”. Jesus said concerning His own death in *John 12:24* “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*” Other than Enoch, Elijah and those who will be here when the Lord comes back, WE ALL FACE AN IMPENDING DEATH.

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- The purchasing your cemetery estate confirms that you are mortal and will depart from this life at some point in the future. I remember while finalizing the contract, there was a certain comfort in knowing that death was real, inevitable and not something to be feared as a Christian. I was humbled, yet felt empowered. I was saddened, yet felt appreciative for the life that I have had thus far.
 - *1 Corinthians 15:55–57* “O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;* ⁵⁷ *but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- At some point everyone within the sound of my voice will be facing the reality of death. The question is “Have we really come to the point accepting it?” We see salvation through the death of Christ and inherit salvation through the death of ourselves. We cannot appreciate the coming resurrection unless if we do not see the impending death that awaits us. We bought cemetery property out of acceptance to the reality of our deaths.

Fighting Death

A Turkish watch repairer, All Yucel, has built himself a special grave which has an eight-inch window on top. He plans to install a push-button electric alarm bell inside the grave. If he is buried alive by mistake, he can push the button to call the cemetery’s guard room. He also plans to have an electric light burning inside his grave for one week after his burial. At the week’s end the cemetery guards will check to see if he is really dead and put out the light. -James C. Hefley

2) Out of Commitment to Our Marriage.

- It says of the first marriage in *Genesis 2:24* “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*” Jesus quoted the same passage in *Matthew 19:5*. Ironically in being a carpenter, the word He used for “*joined*” finds its way into the language in referring to the gluing of two pieces of wood in making furniture or a similar structure. It was a permanent gluing that was meant for the life of the piece of furniture. Marriage is intended to be a life-long covenant.
- Jana and I were married many years ago. As you can see from the picture, much has changed. On that day we took vows to stick together for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in good health and in sickness, until death do us part (you know the routine).
- There are many opportunities to demonstrate this commitment of married life through the natural struggles that a couple will encounter. Having children, paying bills, making sure the family is provided for, growing together and growing closer to Jesus. All these decisions communicate longevity in the marriage. There are only a handful of life’s choices that represent “death do us part” and none more than purchasing the final location of interment. In fact I reminded Jana right before finalizing the deal “You do know this means that we are planning to spend the rest of our lives together?”



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- We left the cemetery that day feeling good about our decision. We bought cemetery property out of a commitment to our marriage.

3) Out of Responsibility to Our Family

- There is an ancient record of a cemetery transaction that took place in Genesis 23. Abraham was in the foreign land of the Amorites when his wife Sarah died. He was in need of a burial space for his wife and went to a local owner of some land whose name was Ephron.
- *Genesis 23:17–20 So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over¹⁸ to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.¹⁹ After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.²⁰ So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.*
- This cave and surrounding grounds became the mausoleum space of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. Today it is referred to as the *Tomb of the Patriarchs* and is enclosed in a large, beautiful building (see right). It is Judaism’s second most sacred location in the world, only behind the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Not only was Abraham having to take care of Sarah’s burial estate (at-need), he was also taking care of his and many descendant’s burial estate (pre-need).
- When a loved-one dies, there are certain responsibilities that must take place for the burial. If the deceased has not taken the time to plan these tasks and purchases in advance, someone from his circle would be left to face the difficulties and decisions at a time when they are hurting.
 - What would have mom or dad wanted for a service?
 - Where are they going to be buried?
 - Who is going to pay for this?
- The apostle Paul wrote in *1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*. I know this referring to the basic necessities of life, but in principle form can it not also refer to that which leaves our descendents into poverty?
 - Countless sons, daughters and other family members every year will face the daunting task of having to scrape together their last pennies to bury a parent or loved one.
 - Many thousands of families every year will face the burial decisions without any input from deceased loved ones.
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- We chose what we wanted, what we could afford, what we felt was dignified and what we knew our family would appreciate. In fact we will have a picture of our family and an open Bible in our niche spaces. We want all to know who come to our grave that we loved each other, our family and most of all, our God. Why did Doug and Jana decide to buy their burial estate at Rolling Green? We did it out of responsibility to our family.

The Grave of Thaddeus Stevens

Shortly before the Civil War a young lawyer came down from Vermont and settled in Adams County, Pennsylvania. There he saw fugitive slaves escaping from bondage, and as a conductor on the Underground Railroad he helped them to liberty. The irony of the thing entered into his soul and he gave himself with all his powers to combat that evil and to deliver the oppressed. When the great crisis, to which all those events were pointing, had broken over the nation, Thaddeus Stevens was perhaps the most powerful influence in the government of the United States. When he came to die, his only attendants were two black preachers.



Today in the very midst of Lancaster, in a shabby cemetery, at the intersection of North Mulberry and West Chestnut Street, you can see his tomb (to the right). He chose where he was buried and what he wanted on the marker in advance. On the marker are these words: “Finding that other cemeteries were restricted as to race by charter rights, I have chosen to lie in this humble spot, in order that I might testify, even in my death, to those principles which I have advocated through a long life.”

4) Out of Love for Our Church Family

- In Genesis 49:29–50:1 there is a moving event in the life of Jacob. He was on his deathbed and had just completed a final charge to all of his sons. He then made the request, “*I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah...*” The final two verses of that quote is written, “*When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.^{50:1} Then Joseph fell on his father’s face, and wept over him and kissed him.*”
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 - My children were raised here.
 - You have always been a precious family to us.
 - We have weathered the bad times and savored the good times together.
 - We have watched many born into the world and many others born-again into Christ.
 - We have together shared dreams, goals, passions, struggles, tears and joys.
- We may someday move to another place. We might someday go to another one of the fifty states to continue to work for the Lord, but the bottom line is we will be coming back from Egypt because you are the "MY PEOPLE" of our lives.
- We bought cemetery property at Rolling Green out of love for our church family. It was not too hard for us to make up our mind.

Make Up Your Mind!

Following the burial of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, his casket was moved 17 times, chiefly to prevent its being stolen and held for ransom. Six men nearly succeeded once, on a night in 1876, but they were surprised and frightened away by the custodian when leaving the tomb with the body. Consequently, it was hidden under a pile of a scrap lumber in the cellar during the next two years. Since 1901, the casket has been locked in a steel cage and buried in solid cement ten feet below the floor of the mausoleum in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois. -Freling Foster

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- In the passage above we find a great moment of history, the burial of Jesus in the tomb. In just three short days He would be resurrected from the dead and be forever referred to as Jesus the Christ. The fact that He was entombed in a mausoleum space is the reality of how dead He really was, for He was Graveyard Dead! One cannot be truly resurrected if they cannot be proclaimed dead in the grave. The very definition of the gospel as defined by Paul the apostle is the death, BURIAL and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). It was that power of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that is the basis of all Christianity (Romans 1:4). That is the primary importance of the passage of Matthew 27:57-60.
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- The scriptures are very clear concerning the reality of death. Hebrews 9:27 states that “...it is appointed for men to once to die...” and Job 14:5 confirms “*that our days are determined, the number of his months is with God*”. Ecclesiastes 3:2 states that there is “*A time to give birth and a time to die...*” recognizing that death is a natural step following birth into the world. It is what Joshua referred to in Josh 23:13 as “*going the way of all the earth*”. Jesus said concerning His own death in *John 12:24* “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*” Other than Enoch, Elijah and those who will be here when the Lord comes back, WE ALL FACE AN IMPENDING DEATH.

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 - Who is going to pay for this?
- The apostle Paul wrote in *1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*. I know this referring to the basic necessities of life, but in principle form can it not also refer to that which leaves our descendents into poverty?
 - Countless sons, daughters and other family members every year will face the daunting task of having to scrape together their last pennies to bury a parent or loved one.
 - Many thousands of families every year will face the burial decisions without any input from deceased loved ones.
 - Many widows have longed to have just five minutes with their husband to ask, “Is this what you wanted?”



Why Did Doug and Jana Buy Cemetery Property at Rolling Green?

By Doug Hamilton

- I have personally witnessed family members of a deceased mother argue to the point of fisticuffs over the stressful personal and monetary decisions to be made in a moment of duress.
- We chose what we wanted, what we could afford, what we felt was dignified and what we knew our family would appreciate. In fact we will have a picture of our family and an open Bible in our niche spaces. We want all to know who come to our grave that we loved each other, our family and most of all, our God. Why did Doug and Jana decide to buy their burial estate at Rolling Green? We did it out of responsibility to our family.

The Grave of Thaddeus Stevens

Shortly before the Civil War a young lawyer came down from Vermont and settled in Adams County, Pennsylvania. There he saw fugitive slaves escaping from bondage, and as a conductor on the Underground Railroad he helped them to liberty. The irony of the thing entered into his soul and he gave himself with all his powers to combat that evil and to deliver the oppressed. When the great crisis, to which all those events were pointing, had broken over the nation, Thaddeus Stevens was perhaps the most powerful influence in the government of the United States. When he came to die, his only attendants were two black preachers.



Today in the very midst of Lancaster, in a shabby cemetery, at the intersection of North Mulberry and West Chestnut Street, you can see his tomb (to the right). He chose where he was buried and what he wanted on the marker in advance. On the marker are these words: “Finding that other cemeteries were restricted as to race by charter rights, I have chosen to lie in this humble spot, in order that I might testify, even in my death, to those principles which I have advocated through a long life.”

4) Out of Love for Our Church Family

- In Genesis 49:29–50:1 there is a moving event in the life of Jacob. He was on his deathbed and had just completed a final charge to all of his sons. He then made the request, “*I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah...*” The final two verses of that quote is written, “*When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.^{50:1} Then Joseph fell on his father’s face, and wept over him and kissed him.*”
- The term “gathered to my people” was a reference of death and having his beloved offspring surrounding him. Jacob requested to be taken the great distance back to the cave of Machpelah, where his grandfather, grandmother, father, mother and wife were buried. It would not be Egypt that he would be buried, but where his people are. Egypt was not home, but Hebron was his home.
- Jana and I have resided in many places in our lives. She was born in Virginia and I was born in Nebraska. She grew up in Wisconsin and Iowa. As husband and wife we have lived in many locations in Iowa, once in Texas and here in the Camp Hill area for the last decade.

Why Did Doug and Jana Buy Cemetery Property at Rolling Green?

By Doug Hamilton

- When we were making our decision to buy our cemetery property here in Camp Hill, it was out of love for this congregation, for you are our people. There have been many church families that we have been a part of through the years, but you people are MY PEOPLE! You people are Jana's people! You people are my family's people. There is nowhere else that we could be more gathered among MY PEOPLE than among YOU PEOPLE!
 - My children were raised here.
 - You have always been a precious family to us.
 - We have weathered the bad times and savored the good times together.
 - We have watched many born into the world and many others born-again into Christ.
 - We have together shared dreams, goals, passions, struggles, tears and joys.
- We may someday move to another place. We might someday go to another one of the fifty states to continue to work for the Lord, but the bottom line is we will be coming back from Egypt because you are the "MY PEOPLE" of our lives.
- We bought cemetery property at Rolling Green out of love for our church family. It was not too hard for us to make up our mind.

Make Up Your Mind!

Following the burial of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, his casket was moved 17 times, chiefly to prevent its being stolen and held for ransom. Six men nearly succeeded once, on a night in 1876, but they were surprised and frightened away by the custodian when leaving the tomb with the body. Consequently, it was hidden under a pile of a scrap lumber in the cellar during the next two years. Since 1901, the casket has been locked in a steel cage and buried in solid cement ten feet below the floor of the mausoleum in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois. -Freling Foster

We bought our cemetery property...

- 1) Out of acceptance of Reality.
- 2) Out of Commitment to our Marriage.
- 3) Out of responsibility to our Family.
- 4) Out of love for our Church Family.