

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 15:42-47

Life Lesson

True faith is not based on partial truths or comfortable beliefs; it relies on the full reality of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Because Christ genuinely died for our sins, we are called to truly live for Him. This involves stepping out of fear and into bold obedience, trusting that the same power that secured our salvation now invites us to walk in newness of life.

Examine Scripture

42 *When it was already evening, because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath), 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who was himself looking forward to the kingdom of God, came and boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. 44 Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had already died. 45 When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph. 46 After he bought some linen cloth, Joseph took him down and wrapped him in the linen. Then he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock and rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching where he was laid.*

- Circle "already evening" and "day before the Sabbath" in (v. 42). Draw a line to connect the two.
- Underline "Joseph of Arimathea," "prominent member," and "looking forward to the kingdom" in (v. 43).

Crucial Evidence for Christ's Death

Since the moment of Jesus' glorious resurrection, people have tried to deny its historicity and authenticity. This attack on the resurrection alone demonstrates its incredible importance. Without the resurrection, everything in Christianity falls short, and every promise of Christ diminishes. Many different approaches skeptics take to challenge the resurrection exist. Some suggest that the Disciples either sneaked past the Roman guards at the tomb or somehow overpowered them to steal Jesus' body. This seems postposterior considering the Disciples were fearful and hiding in the upper room. Another theory is that the women and the Disciples actually went to the wrong tomb. They mistakenly took someone else's tomb for Jesus', and that is why His body was not there. Again, this is ridiculous considering that Mark writes, "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching where he was laid" (v. 47). They would have clearly known which tomb it was and how to lead the Disciples there.

So, if someone genuinely wants to challenge the resurrection, what is the most effective argument to use? It's a straightforward one: Jesus did not really die on the cross. There is a popular skeptic theory called the Swoon Theory. This theory suggests that Jesus was incorrectly declared dead; he simply fainted from blood loss or exhaustion and appeared to his disciples as dead. However, this theory clearly ignores common sense. For example, Roman soldiers were experts in crucifixion and would not have mistaken Jesus' death, especially after piercing his side with a spear. There is no way Jesus, or anyone else, could have endured the scourging, beatings, carrying the cross, and crucifixion, and still somehow have the energy and strength to roll a massive stone away from the entrance of the tomb from the inside.

Why is it important to understand the historicity of Jesus' death? If Jesus did not truly die, then we have no hope. Paul reminds us in (Rom. 3:23): "For the wages of sin is death." To pay for our sins, death was necessary—not just beatings or torture, but death itself.

- Circle “boldly” in (v. 43).
- Bracket “Pilate was surprised” in (v. 44). Write “crucifixion = slow death” above it.
- Underline “When he found out from the centurion” in (v. 45) and write “death confirmed.”
- Bracket “he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock and rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb” in (v. 46).

Personal Notes

Atonement required blood and death, not merely blood. Jesus died and was buried.

That is why this week’s text is so significant. In the broader story of Mark’s Gospel, he briefly mentions Jesus’ burial. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Mark clearly emphasizes Jesus’ burial, showing that Jesus truly paid the wages of our sin. Sometimes we overlook or skip passages like this. However, this section reminds us not only of the wages of our sin but also of the extent Jesus went to atone for those sins.

V. 42

According to Mark, Jesus died after the ninth hour, which is around 3:00 pm. In (v. 42), Mark states that “it was already evening.” This is important because the Sabbath was approaching at sunset. Jesus’ body had to be taken down from the cross and cared for before sunset. Mark provides commentary for his non-Jewish audience: “because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath). The “day of preparation” refers to the time of preparation for the Sabbath; it allows people to do necessary work and preparation before the day of rest. Sunset would have been around 6:00 pm, so there was very little time to get permission from Pilate to retrieve the body. In all likelihood, some preparations were already underway, such as purchasing the necessary burial items (linen cloths and spices). So, arrangements for the body had to happen quickly, but it would take more than a typical request. Usually, family members would be able to retrieve the body, but with Jesus, a prominent and divisive figure, the Romans may be hesitant to release His body. Since the disciples were hiding and unlikely to be allowed near Pilate, they needed someone with power and influence.

V. 43

Enter Joseph of Arimathea. Mark states that Joseph was “a prominent member of the Sanhedrin” (v. 43). This means he sat in the Sanhedrin—the very body that had, only hours earlier, handed Jesus over to be slaughtered. Yet, as revealed in the Gospel of Luke, Joseph did not consent to the Sanhedrin’s ruling or to its treatment of Jesus (Luke 23:50-51). Matthew and John refer to him as a good and righteous man, even as a follower of Jesus. Some scholars argue that Joseph’s concern about Jesus’ body (as well as the other criminals) had more to do with his strict devotion to the Sabbath and the forbiddance of bodies hanging on the cross on the Sabbath. However, as Mark and the other writers demonstrate, Joseph is deeply devoted to Jesus, even at the moment of His death.

Therefore, Joseph wanted to honor Jesus. It is clear that he was a spiritual man, as Mark describes him as one “who was himself

Personal Notes

looking forward to the kingdom of God" (v. 42). Clearly, Joseph had an understanding of the kingdom of God and Jesus' role in it. He did not see Jesus as just another rabbi; he saw Him as the Messiah. In a sense, Joseph lived in the tension of "already but not yet," longing for the kingdom of God while surrounded by those who sought to destroy it.

Empowered by his faith in Jesus, Joseph approached Pilate for the body. Joseph "boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body" (v. 43). Notice the word "boldly." While Jesus' Disciples were hiding in the upper room, Joseph was filled with compassion, devotion, and courage. Grace often appears as a sudden, holy boldness. Joseph risked his reputation, his position of power, and his legal standing to honor a "convicted criminal." True discipleship eventually requires a public exit out of the shadows. You cannot follow the Light in the shadows forever. Following Jesus calls us to move from the sidelines and step into the game; it demands we stop hiding in the upper room and walk the streets in bold witness.

Vs. 44-45

When hearing of Jesus' death, "Pilate was surprised that he was already dead" (v. 44). Pilate's surprise is understandable because crucifixion was meant to be a slow, agonizing death; it was supposed to last longer than a few hours, sometimes even days. So, Pilate was surprised and confused by Jesus' quick death. However, Jesus' death was different because Jesus actually had the authority and will to choose when to die: "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father" (John 10:18).

Pilate called one of the centurions to inquire about Jesus' death: "Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had already died" (v. 44). The exchange between Pilate and the centurion is a crucial apologetic. This confirms that Jesus actually died, and the Swoon Theory (or any other heresy) is impossible. It was the role of the centurion to verify the death of those who were crucified. He was a professional and would have ensured Jesus was truly dead. After confirming Jesus' death, Pilate released His body to Joseph for burial. In Pilate's view, Jesus was no longer a threat to the Roman Empire. Any rebellion or insurrection had been suppressed, so there was no harm in releasing His body to Joseph.

V. 46

After buying the necessary supplies, Joseph retrieved Jesus' body and took Him to a new tomb for burial. Robert Stein writes, "Jesus was buried in keeping with the Jewish tradition. This would also have included closing the eyes, trimming the hair, placing spices

Personal Reflection

1. Why is the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection essential to my personal faith, and how would my life change if I doubted or minimized it?
2. In what ways am I tempted to "stay in the shadows" like the disciples, and what would it look like for me to step out boldly like Joseph of Arimathea?
3. Do I truly understand the severity of my sin and the importance of Christ's death, or have I become too familiar with the concept of grace?
4. How can I show devotion to Jesus during difficult or inconvenient times, like the women who stayed present even in sorrow and danger?
5. What does it practically mean for me to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), and where is God calling me to live differently because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection?

Commentaries

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Daniel Akin

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16 by John MacArthur

BECNT: Mark by Robert Stein

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*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to **MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY** disciples of Jesus Christ.*

inside the shroud, and wrapping the body in the shroud." However, since the Sabbath was approaching, it is unlikely that the full preparation of the body was performed. Hence, the women returned early Sunday morning, after the Sabbath, to prepare the body.

The tomb where Jesus was laid was in a garden near Golgotha. It was likely a hole dug into the rock, creating a walk-in style tomb. The body would have been placed on a stone bench or in a long, carved hole in the wall. In all of the Gospel accounts, it was a walk-in tomb. The large stone rolled across the entrance was there to prevent grave robbers and animals from desecrating the body. Pilate even sealed the stone with a Roman seal and stationed Roman soldiers at the entrance. Maybe it was also to appease the Sanhedrin.

V. 47

Lastly, Mark tells us that "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching where he was laid" (v. 47). While the prominent male disciples (save for John) had scattered, the women remained. Mark chose to show that the humble and marginalized were the primary witnesses to the burial. The women stayed when it was dangerous, and they watched when it was painful. Their presence reminds us that God often entrusts the greatest spiritual blessings to those who simply refuse to leave His side, as demonstrated by the women being the first to see the truth of the resurrection.

The historic confession of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (often called the kerygma) serves as the essential foundation of the Christian faith. Paul records one of the earliest creeds of the Church in (1 Corinthians 15:3-4): "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." This "three-fold cord" has remained unbroken through centuries of theological challenges.

The death and burial are not just an afterthought to the crucifixion; they are the historical proof that confirms the sacrifice. Our faith is not built on a near-death experience; it is built on a substitutionary death. He died and was buried so that the penalty of sin would be fully paid. It shows that the "price paid" was a full human experience, and it prepares the way for a resurrection that was not just "spiritual" or metaphorical, but physical, literal, and victorious. Paul reminds us in (Rom. 6:3-5): "all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection."