

The Burial & Resurrection of Jesus

Mark 15:42-16:13

What is the point of the resurrection of Jesus? Ask that question and nine out of ten times you'll hear about going to heaven when you die—life after death. But Jesus would not have needed to rise again in order to go to heaven; his body could have stayed buried while his soul ascended. Mark emphasizes the *bodily* death and resurrection of Jesus. People want the body, look for it, care for it and don't believe in the resurrection until they see it. This is what the gospel is all about—not esoteric wisdom or inner peace or soul-transformation. It's about Jesus' bodily resurrection, and ours to come. This includes our souls, but a whole lot more.

A Real Death

Though an honored member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea is now courageous and generous, wanting to honor the body of Jesus by getting it off that tree (v43; cf. Is. 53:9; Dt. 21:23). It's the day of Preparation before the Sabbath so he would be unclean taking the body down, the usual task of family. Mark anticipates and squashes the accusation that Joseph took down a half-dead Jesus, something Pilate wouldn't tolerate. His legs didn't need to be broken to hasten death since he had died already, sooner than Pilate expected (v44; Jn. 19:33-34). The women who ministered to him in Galilee are there to mark Jesus' grave (v 47). This narrative cements Jesus' death both to confirm the atonement is complete, and to contrast with the resurrection that follows (Rom. 6:23). Jesus is real dead.

Three Marks of the Real Resurrection

i. Surprising Contrary to what we might ignorantly think of the beliefs or gullibility of ancients, no one believed that dead people could come back to life (vv5-6). This was as startling to them as it would be to us. From the Greco-Roman point of view, the body was a prison and something to be delivered from, so resurrection would be bad news. For faithful Jews, resurrection would come at the end of time, and though it would include individuals, it would occur as the nation is restored and revived (Ez. 37:1-14; Jn. 11:24). None of his followers believed Jesus would rise, and the women are only there to complete the burial (16:1). This event took everyone by surprise even though it happened “just as he told you” (v8; 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). God is always consistent and never predictable, and so we should trust and look for him to deliver wonderfully.

ii. Public The second thing to note about the resurrection is its public nature. As Paul tells Festus, this thing was not done in a corner (Acts 26:26). The women are told to see where he was laid, and then go, tell others (v7). This was not a private revelation, shrouded in secrecy or mystery. The names of these women are given so people could go ask them what happened (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6). Jesus appears after his resurrection seven times in the Gospels, and Acts 1:3-4 tells us he appeared for 40 days to numerous groups of people. It could be a cleverly devised story, except that it wasn't clever. The first people to the tomb are women whose testimony wasn't acceptable in court. In the second century AD Celsus makes this exact point: we can't believe the Gospels about the resurrection because they're based on the testimony of women! God (and we) know better, and the plainest explanation of why eleven saddened cowards became bold, selfless and successful evangelists is because Jesus rose from the dead. He has no tomb.

iii. Pervasive Mark says Jesus met first with Mary Magdalene out of whom he had cast seven demons. John tells us she mistook Jesus for the gardener (20:15). This is the introduction of the new world where we have a new Adam in a new garden meeting a new Eve. This time she doesn't listen to the devil; all her devils are gone. She doesn't welcome death but clings to everlasting life. And this is not the end of history, but the middle. Mary is a type of the Christian church freed, forgiven and sent out by Jesus. Everyone is slow to believe what Jesus did, but they will believe, and Jesus is nothing but patient in redeeming and restoring.

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Mark 16:1-9

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. 9 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

1. Why did Mary Magdalene and the others go to Jesus' tomb (verse 1)? What were they missing (verse 7)?
2. None of the disciples believed that Jesus would rise from the dead, even though he told them beforehand he would (see verse 8 and 8:31). Why do you think the angel told the women to go tell Peter? How was Peter likely feeling at this point?
3. People will often talk about beliefs about God and religion as "private" things that really aren't to be shared or discussed. Is Jesus' resurrection something we keep to ourselves, or is important for everyone? Were the disciples supposed to keep this good news to themselves, or preach it to others?
4. Draw a picture of Jesus meeting with Mary Magdalene.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. --Mark 16:9