

SESSION TWELVE

The Resurrection of Jesus: *Clinging to True Hope (Mark 15:42-16:8)*

“If the coming into existence of the Nazarenes, a phenomenon undeniably attested by the NT, rips a great hole in history, a hole of the size and shape of Resurrection, what does the secular historian propose to stop it up with?”

C. F. D. Moule, *Phenomenon of the New Testament*, 3

I. Overview

Theologian Gary Habermas aptly notes, “That Jesus Christ died and afterward rose from the dead is both the central doctrine of Christian theology and the major fact in a defense of its teachings.” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 938). Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus is the center of the Christian faith and theology. Mark’s Gospel is no exception. Several times Mark highlighted Jesus’ prediction that He would rise from the dead (8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34). And now . . . this has been fulfilled. “He has risen!” (16:6). He is risen, indeed!

II. The Content

A. The Burial of Jesus (15:42-47)

vv. 42-43 - Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin. According to John’s Gospel, another member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, also assists with the burial of Jesus (also, cf. Jn 7:50). One would have expected a member of Jesus’ family or a disciple request Jesus’ body—certainly not one of the members of the Jewish leaders. This fact alone testifies to the historicity of the account. Joseph’s financial ability to provide a newly carved tomb also fulfills Scripture (cf. Isa 53:9). Finally, it should be noted that the description of Joseph suggests that he is a follower of Jesus (cf. Lk 23:50 - “good and righteous man” and Mark 1:15).

vv. 44-45 - The use of “body” only occurs in one other location in Mark’s Gospel, the death of John the Baptist (6:29). Mark may have, once again, intended to link the forerunner’s fate with the Messiah’s destiny.

In case there is any doubt that Jesus died, the centurion confirms Jesus’ death.

vv. 46-47 - With limited time before nightfall and the beginning of the Sabbath, Joseph quickly prepares the body for burial (e.g., washing of the body, wrapping him in a shroud, placing spices, and closing the eyes). The women carefully observed the burial process in order to know the exact location where Jesus’ body would be placed because they were intending to complete the burial process. There can be no mistake that the women went to the correct tomb after the completion of the Sabbath.

B. The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead (16:1-8)

v. 1 - Fully equipped with the necessary resources (e.g., spices), the women are ready to complete the burial process that was interrupted by the Sabbath.

The spices were not used to embalm the body, but rather, they were utilized to alleviate the smell and stench of the decaying process. As noted by one commentator, “they [the women] are too late, not . . . because the body has begun to decay, but because it is no longer there.” (M. Hooker, *Mark*, 383).

v. 2 - “*very early on the first day of the week, at sunrise*” - This Greek phrase indicates that it was already light. This temporal marker also establishes the importance for making Sunday the Christian holy day (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2).

vv. 3-4 - “*had been rolled back*” - The passive voice can be seen as a divine passive. God Himself was the ultimate cause of the stone’s removal. It has been stated that the stone was not rolled away so that Jesus could get out, but so that we could come in!

v. 5 - While the women went to prepare Jesus’ body for burial, the Lord prepares the women for the miraculous. The “young man’s” description indicates this supernatural event (e.g., dressed in white).

v. 6 - The women’s responses include a combination of awe, wonder, and fear. In response, the “young man” delivers several short utterances.

- A word of reassurance that ultimately God is in control (cf. Gen 15:1; Judg 6:23; Dan 10:12; Lk 1:13, 30; 2:10)
- A recognition of why the women are present.
- The pronouncement that Jesus has risen.
- A declaration that Jesus is not present in the tomb.
- A command to go and tell is the expected response.

v. 7 - “Life, discipleship, and the cause of the kingdom of God must go on. The commission to deliver the message presupposes that, despite the scattering in Gethsemane, the disciples including Peter are still to be found together as a group, however demoralised. The fact that Jesus still has a message for them, and still more that it includes the repeated promise of a post-resurrection meeting, may be expected to overcome their self-despair . . .” (France, *Mark*, 681).

v. 8 - This abrupt ending leaves it up to the readers to make the crucial step of faith and decision of obedience for themselves. This rather awkward ending also encourages those who are following Jesus to persevere despite the disobedience and failure of the disciples (cf. Lincoln, *Mark*, 283-300; Tolbert, *Mark*, 297-99).

III. The Intersect

Why is Christ's resurrection vitally important? Charles Ryrie in his work, *Basic Theology*, identifies four major areas (p. 308):

1. *Christ's resurrection is vital to His person.* If Christ did not rise from the dead, then He was a liar, for He predicted that He would (Matt 20:19). The resurrection authenticates our Lord as a true Prophet (also, cf. Matt 28:6).
2. *Christ's resurrection is vital to His work.* His post-resurrection ministry would cease to be. The resurrection allows Him to serve as our High Priest, Advocate, Source of Empowerment, and Head of the Church (cf. Rom 6:1-10; Gal 2:20).
3. *Christ's resurrection is vital to the Gospel.* Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 that Christ's death and resurrection are of utmost importance. Elsewhere, Paul indicates that Jesus was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25).
4. *Christ's resurrection is vital to us.* Without the resurrection, not only is our faith meaningless, our prospects for the future are hopeless (1 Cor 15:13-19). There would be no reality beyond this grave.

"Some people probably think of the Resurrection as a desperate last moment expedient to save the Hero from a situation which had got out of the Author's control." ~ C. S. Lewis