

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

62. The King is Buried

Mark 15:42-46

In the last verses of Mark 15 have the account of the burial of Jesus. This event is central to the Gospel that declares Christ crucified and risen!

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (ESV) ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

QUOTE: Wilbur Smith — *“We know more about the burial of the Lord Jesus than we know of the burial of any single character in all of ancient history. We know infinitely more about his burial than we do the burial of any Old Testament character, of any king of Babylon, Pharaoh of Egypt, any philosopher of Greece, or triumphant Caesar. We know who took His body from the cross; we know something of the wrapping of the body in spices, and burial clothes; we know the very tomb in which this body was placed, the name of the man who owned it..... We know even where this tomb was located. We have four records of this burial of our Lord, all of them in amazing agreement, the record of Matthew, a disciple of Christ who was there when Jesus was crucified; the record of Mark, which some say was written within ten years of our Lord’s ascension; the record of Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, and a great historian; and the record of John, who was the last to leave the cross, and with Peter, the first of the Twelve on Easter to behold the empty tomb.”*

I think it’s a **must** for us to look at the composite of the details given to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. As we walk through Mark’s account we’ll see that there are specific details common to the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as well as unique details in the Gospel of John.

Mark 15:42–47 (CSB) ⁴²When it was already evening, because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath), ⁴³Joseph 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. ⁴⁴Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had already died. ⁴⁵When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶After 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. ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching where he was laid.

FIRST — Each of the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) make reference to **the time** and **the day** of the burial of Jesus.

THE TIME of the burial of Jesus

Mark 15:42 ⁴²When it was already evening

The Jews marked the beginning of the new day at sunset. So for them, “evening” referred to the hours between mid-afternoon (3 p.m.) and sunset. At sunset the day ended, and the new day began.

THE DAY of the burial of Jesus

Mark 15:42 ⁴²When it was already evening, because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath),

Luke 23:54 (CSB) ⁵⁴It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

Sabbath was on Saturday. Since no work was allowed on the Jewish Sabbath, Friday was referred to as the **Preparation Day**. The New Bible Commentary points out that this confirms that Jesus was crucified on Friday, Nisan 15. ¹

SECOND — All four Gospel accounts tell us that a man named Joseph, from a Judean town called Arimathea, went to the Roman governor (Pontius Pilate) the very man who sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion — and asked permission to have the body of dead body of Jesus.

¹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 191). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Mark 15:43 (CSB) ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea... came and **boldly** went to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body.

***Matthew 27:57–58 (CSB)** ⁵⁷When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released.*

***Luke 23:50; 52 (CSB)** ⁵⁰There was a good and righteous man named Joseph, a member of the Sanhedrin... ⁵²He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus's body.*

***John 19:38 (CSB)** ³⁸After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus's body.*

This was no small bit of business — Mark let's us know that it required **boldness** for Joseph to go before Pilate —

***Mark 15:43 (NLT)** ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea **took a risk** and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.*

Also — Joseph didn't go *ask* for the dead body of Jesus for no reason. It was common practice for a body to be left upon a cross either to rot or to be eaten by predatory birds or animals because the dead body *was considered to be the property of the Roman government.*²

In his commentary on the Gospel of Mark **William Lane** gives us this important piece of historical background

In antiquity the execution of a condemned man did not mark the final moment of his humiliation. Roman law dictated the loss of all honors in death, and even the right of burial was determined by magisterial decree. Writing of the age of Tiberius, Tacitus remarks that "people sentenced to death forfeited their

² Cole, R. A. (1989). Mark: An Introduction and Commentary (Vol. 2, p. 333). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

property and were forbidden burial” (Annals VI. 29).³

Family members could petition the release of the body — but it was solely left to the discretion of the magistrate. The major exception to this was regarding permission to bury someone convicted of high treason.⁴ Remember — Jesus was crucified because He claimed to be king. That makes Joseph’s request and Pilate’s response extraordinary.

THE THIRD COMMON DETAIL — in all four Gospels’ account of the burial of Jesus is the man, Joseph of Arimathea

Matthew 27:57 tells us that he was a rich man. We know that because he had a tomb carved out of solid stone for himself. This would have required tremendous wealth because of the man-hours involved in carving a burial place out of solid rock with hammers and chisels.

Luke 23:51 tells us that Joseph had not consented to the Council’s decision to turn Jesus over to Pilate, nor the execution of Jesus.

Mark 15:34 and **Luke 23:51** tell us that Joseph was “*looking for the kingdom of God*”. The very location of his tomb is proof that Joseph was waiting for the Messiah! He went to great expense to make this tomb in Jerusalem, not in Arimathea. It was in Arimathea where his father and grandfather and great grandfather would have been entombed. That was where their burial plot would have been. By way of family lineage he had the right to be buried there too. But Joseph believed the Messiah was coming to Jerusalem — he wanted to be there for when the Kingdom of God began. So Joseph was a man waiting for the Kingdom — he has a new tomb carved out of stone, at great expense in Jerusalem. No one had ever been buried in it. He’s planning to be buried there. He’s waiting for the Kingdom of God.

³ Lane, W. L. (1974). *The Gospel of Mark* (pp. 577–578). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁴ Lane, W. L. (1974). *The Gospel of Mark* (p. 578). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Luke 23:50 tells us that Joseph was a *“good and righteous man”*). That’s unusual! Not all wealthy men in this world are good. Many of them use their wealth as a means to power — and their power as a means to wealth.

John 19:38 tells us that Joseph ³*...was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews*. We remember from **John 9** and the healing of the man born blind that the religious rulers of Israel had already made it clear that anyone who publicly identified themselves with and openly followed Jesus would be excommunicated! That’s why the parents of the young man who was healed wouldn’t testify on behalf of their son — they didn’t want to be cut off from the synagogue, cut off from the temple. If you were excommunicated you lost everything. That’s why Joseph *was a disciple of Jesus Christ, but secretly, for fear of the Jews*.

But suddenly, at this very moment he steps out of the shadows. He steps out into the open, and he goes to Pilate. Both Matthew (27:58) and Luke (23:52) tell us that he goes to Pilate and begs (to ask for with urgency, even to the point of demanding—⁵) for the body.

Remember — throughout the proceedings in the dark hours of the morning the Jews stood outside and made Pilate come out to them because they didn’t want to be defiled by entering the house of a gentile. Pilate already harbored deep resentment towards the Jews and they only exacerbated his animosity towards them as he had to go in and out talking to them, going back and talking to Jesus, coming out. Joseph of Arimathea went right into Pilate’s quarters. He’s not worried about being defiled because he knows that if he gets his hands on the dead body of Jesus he’s going to be defiled according to the Law of Moses.

Mark 15:45 (CSB) ⁴⁵**When he (Pilate) found out from the centurion (that Jesus was already dead), he gave the corpse to Joseph.**

Mark tells us that Pilate gave the body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea. Literally, Pilate “gifted” him the body. That word is used in only one other place in the New Testament.

2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV) *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to*

⁵ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible societies.

life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,

So Pilate gave the body to Joseph as a gift. He just must have known it would irk the Jews.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all include Joseph of Arimathea in the account of the burial of Jesus. But there was one other man involved in the burial of Jesus — we find him in the Gospel of John: **NICODEMUS**

***John 19:38–39 (CSB)** ³⁸After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus’s body. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and took his body away. ³⁹Nicodemus (who had previously come to him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes.*

John goes out of his way to remind his readers that Nicodemus is the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. John wants us to see Nicodemus stepping out of the darkness and emerging into the light.

Joseph supplies the incredibly expensive tomb and **Nicodemus** provides some 75 pounds of aloe and of myrrh. The cost of those spices is hard for us to imagine. This was a burial fit for a king — and indeed it was more than that — it was the burial of the King of kings — though I don’t think either of these men realized it at this point in time.

So here are these two men. They had watched Jesus. They had listened to Him. By their own testimony, they had seen His miracles. They would have no doubt been at the temple discourses towards the end of the public ministry of Jesus — but they were afraid.

In the Book of Proverbs (29:25) Solomon wrote, *“The fear of man lays a snare.”* If you and I are afraid of what other people are going to think about us because of our faith in Jesus, we will live far below the way the Holy Spirit would have us live. I’m sure that you know believers who that are silenced because of fear — perhaps

you know how you have been silenced because of fear.

Here's the deal.

QUOTE: William Barclay — *The death of Jesus had done for Joseph and Nicodemus what not even his life could do.*

They saw Jesus subjected to a trial that broke every rule of jurisprudence in Israel. They saw Jesus blindfolded and beaten at the house of the high priest. They saw Him mocked. They saw men spit upon Him. They saw Jesus brought out to the Pavement brutalized by the Roman scourge. They saw Him nailed to a cross! They cannot sit in the shadows a moment longer. They have to communicate with each other. Maybe it was at the cross. Maybe they were talking when that darkness hit the land at noon. Imagine Jerusalem and, I believe, the whole world going black for three hours. Just try to imagine what those three hours were like. No doubt the people who were around the cross mocking Jesus got quiet real fast.

Their actions seem well coordinated. They decided that Joseph would go to Pilate to plead for the Body of Jesus and Nicodemus would get the burial spices.

The Gospel of John gives us this very specific detail —

John 19:40 ⁴⁰*So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.*

It is interesting to note that this method of burial was instituted by Gamaliel. Before the days of Gamaliel rich Jews were buried with the jewels and fancy garments and poor Jews were buried with nothing. Gamaliel said, "We came into this world with nothing; we leave this world with nothing. We all stand before God the same. It's not right for a rich Jew to be buried one way and a poor Jew to be buried another way." And he made an edict that every Jew was to be buried in a white linen shroud.

Joseph of Arimathea gets that linen and then he comes for the body. Nicodemus brings 75 pounds of burial spices.

Mark tells us —

Mark 15:46 (CSB) ⁴⁶After 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.

The grammar makes it clear that Joseph “took Him down.” Dr. Luke says that Joseph took the body down. John uses the plural, “They took the body ...”

A pastor named Damian Kyle made a great observation here. He said, “*Wow, this is not the work of rich men.*” Try to picture these incredibly wealthy men standing at the cross. Their minds would have been clouded with grief, they had to be shocked and horrified by what they saw hanging on the cross. They had to be thinking, “Where do we even begin... How do we get him down from this thing? If it was you, where would you begin? Remember — the victims were not hanging high in the air. They were only a couple of feet off the ground. Many people that were crucified were eaten by jackals from the ground up. If my memory serves me well, the shortest crucifixion on record was 32 hours and the longest one was 13 days. Pilate was amazed that Jesus was already dead (Mark 15:44). These are two old guys. They’re wondering, *Which nail do we take out first? Is it the one in His feet first?* Did Nicodemus work with some kind of a pry bar while Joseph of Arimathea placed his arm around the body of Jesus? Imagine Joseph placing his hand on the back of Jesus that had been torn to shreds by the scourge, exposing internal organs, huge splinters of wood from the cross imbedded into His tissue. When that nail came out did the body of Jesus, dead weight now, fall across his shoulders?

These two men had NEVER done anything like this before. We can’t imagine the physical struggle. If you’ve had to carry your kid into the house from the car when they are asleep you know something about dead weight. But this was not the dead weight of a pre-schooler. This was the dead weight of a grown man. They’re struggling to get Him down, and then lay Him down with some dignity. They must have been covered with blood.

QUOTE: John G. Butler; Jesus Christ: His Crucifixion — *If you are going to honor Christ, there will be times when perspiration will be required.* ⁶

⁶ Butler, J. G. (2005). *Jesus Christ: His Crucifixion* (355). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.

the burial custom of the Jews would have included washing the body of the dead. The Jews believed that because you were washed and wrapped when you came into the world that you should be washed and wrapped when you leave it. It tells us this in the book of Acts (Acts 9) about a certain disciple named Tabitha who died. We are told — *Acts 9:37 when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.* Orthodox Jews in Israel still do this. The Mishna talks about Sabbath exemptions which permitted the Jews to wash the bodies and comb and even cut the hair of the dead before the person was wrapped.

So here are these two men. They not only took the nails out of the hands and feet of Jesus — they are now going to prepare for burial the body of Jesus that was so brutalized, so beaten. They would have taken the crown of thorns off of His head. There is no record of it being in the tomb. Again — I can't imagine trying to pull out of the scalp and skull of Jesus the spike like thorns that had been beaten into it; some of them broken off under His skin.

Then with damp cloths they began to wash His face that had been beaten beyond recognition and spit upon — His beard plucked out; then His chest, where the scourge came around and ripped away flesh. Imagine cleaning the wound from the Roman spear — a wound so large that Jesus would say to Thomas after the Resurrection — “thrust your hand into my side.” Then the wounds where the nails were driven through His wrists and His feet. Then to roll Him over and to wash the back that had been utterly torn to shreds by the Roman scourge. I wonder, did they comb His hair before they were done?

DON'T MISS THIS — When His work was done, the Father handed Him over to loving hands that with tremendous love and gentleness prepared His body for burial.

Then they would have wrapped the body of Jesus in the burial linens.

QUOTE: D.A. Carson — The spices were apparently laid the length of the *strips of linen (othonia)*, which were then wound around Jesus' body. More spices were laid under the body, and perhaps packed around it⁷

⁷ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (630). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids,

His hands would be wrapped at His side, then once more where the elbows were. The last piece of burial linen was used to tie the mouth shut, wrapped around the jaw. That is the napkin they would find laying separate from the rest of the linens in the empty tomb on Easter morning.

What were they thinking while they were doing all of this? Were they thinking of Psalm 22 — “they pierced my hands and my feet”? Did Nicodemus remember that conversation he had with Jesus under the cover of night when Jesus said, *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up*? Did they think of Isaiah 52, “His visage more marred than any man”? Or while they were washing the wounds from His scourging did they think of Isaiah 53, “With his stripes we are healed”?

My friend Joe Focht made this profound observation — *All of this for dead Jesus. They didn't know the next chapter. They put everything on the line for a corpse, for the dead Jesus. We get to serve a living Jesus.*

Mark 15:46 (CSB) says that after all of this **he... rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb.**

Then they had to walk home. Imagine the spectacle that they were — Covered with blood. Emotionally and physically spent.

But **we** know what **they** didn't know as they were walking home in that state. We know that on the first day of the week word would come that Mary and the women went to the tomb and found that great stone rolled away. They ran and got John and Peter. They would run and look in and they saw the burial line laying flat and the linen that was wrapped around his head laying by itself.

What was it like for Joseph of Arimathea to come to his own tomb with Nicodemus and for them to look in and see the burial linens they had wrapped around Jesus, see the spices they had jammed in, see the work they had done — just laying empty and laying flat, and to see the napkin that was wrapped around His head laid by itself, “folded up,”

Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that after the resurrection Jesus appeared to over 500 witnesses at one time. Were they there in that crowd? I tend to think that one of those 500 was named Joseph, and one of those 500 was named Nicodemus.

What was it like for them to look into the eyes that they had closed and see Him looking back at them, alive? What was it like for them to see the hands and the feet that were pierced, animated and alive again? What was it like for them to look at the face that they had cleaned? What was it like for these men when they took the bread and the cup? They had washed His body broken, they had washed His shed blood. What were Easter's like for these men?

CLOSING

Revelation 5:1-9 (ESV) Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain,

Literally — a lamb, with the marks of slaughter upon it,

.... ⁷And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

In our first glimpse of Jesus in Glory He is described as a lamb. It literally reads, *a little lamb; a little lamb with the marks of slaughter upon it*. But this little lamb has seven horns, which means He is all- powerful; seven eyes, which means He is all knowing. The little lamb with the marks of slaughter is omnipotent and omniscient — and He is the object of heaven’s worship!

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had lovingly washed and cleaned those marks of slaughter. They had no idea that the One they were wrapping in burial robes would clothe them with His righteousness by way of the wounds they had just washed. And because the blood they washed from His wounded body is the very thing that washed them from their sins — they were in glory singing the song of the lamb!

If they were invited to come speak at Metro, what do you think they would talk about? I’m pretty sure that all they could talk about was that day when the sky went dark, when the Earth shook, and the Lamb of God took away the sins of the world.

The One whose wounds they washed is the One we worship today. The One whose wounds they washed is the centerpiece of heaven and the centerpiece of all eternity! The One whose wounds they washed is alive today and wants to be at the center of your life; at the center of your relationships; at the center of Metro; at the center of your forever.

FOR THE UNBELIEVER — Tonight you need to know that the blood they washed from the body of Jesus is the very thing, the only thing, that can wash you from your sin and bring you into a relationship with God who IS life.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN — Those wounds of Jesus caused them to see that Jesus was the best thing in their lives. Better than their title. Better than their wealth. Better than the opinion of man. Better than their position. **Is the lamb bearing the marks of slaughter the best thing in your life?**

In heaven — the wounds of the Lamb move all of heaven to lavish upon Jesus praise and honor and adoration. The wounds of Jesus **not only** killed their fears; the wounds of Jesus made Him the object of worship; moved them to labor and lavish the dead body of Jesus with tenderness and care; moved Joseph to lavish

upon Jesus his personal burial place; moved Nicodemus to lavish upon Jesus a wealth of burial spices.

Is the Lamb bearing the marks of slaughter the object of your worship?

Do His wounds move US to lavish upon Him our time, talents and treasure?