Mark 15:42-16:8
Death and Resurrection of the King

# Introduction

For the past several weeks, the world has been looking forward to Easter.

Most of us in the Western world have looked forward to the holidays and shopping bargains that inevitably come with Easter.

Some of us look forward to all the egg shaped chocolates, while others cannot go past the hot cross buns at the supermarkets.

There are holidays to go to and the visit to the Royal Easter show to plan for the family.

All in all, Easter is a pretty busy period, and it is a good thing that we have an extra long weekend to do all of these things.

So in such a happy occasion like Easter, why have we gathered this weekend to think about death?

Especially a death that has happened 2000 years ago?

This is because fundamentally, Easter is a Christian holiday celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So why is it that we Christians celebrate Easter and have been doing so for the last 2000 years?

It is because the death and resurrection of Jesus is central to our faith.

And responding to that death and resurrection is truly about life and death.

So if the Easter event is central to Christianity, then it stands to reason that the death and resurrection of Jesus had to be genuine.

If his death and resurrection was nothing but figurative language or a big lie.

Then people have truly believed in vain for the last 2000 years.

And as the apostle Paul says, we are to be pitied most among men.

So today let’s consider the truthfulness of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And consider what the death and resurrection of Jesus achieved for us.

And finally think about how we should respond to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

# Did JEsus really die and rise again?

## Jesus truly died

Firstly we want to look at the truthfulness of the death of Jesus.

On Good Friday, we saw how Jesus was abused and mocked before he was finally crucified.

And we are told that Jesus was crucified at 9am in the morning until 3pm in the afternoon.

When according to Mark 15:37, Jesus breathed his last.

So we are left with no doubt from the account of Mark that Jesus had expired on the cross.

But was he really dead or did he just feint?

We know he was dead because firstly in verse 43, we are told that Joseph of Arimathea approached Pilate to receive the body for burial.

Now people taking bodies to be buried is no big deal.

But consider who Joseph is.

We are told that he is a prominent member of the Council.

He could very well have been a member of a town council in Arimathea.

But given that the Council which was prominent in this Gospel had been the Sanhedrin.

It seems more likely that Joseph belonged to the same Council that found Jesus guilty of blasphemy.

So considering who he is, it is surprising to say the least that Joseph had come to Pilate for the body of Jesus.

This is because of the risk involved in coming to Pilate for the body.

Firstly he risked losing everything by going against the Council who had considered Jesus deserving of death.

He risked losing his position in the Council and even being branded as a traitor for siding with Jesus.

Secondly he risked his own life and perhaps even the life of his family in approaching Pilate.

This is because asking for the body of Jesus for burial may have been interpreted as being a follower of Jesus, or at the very least sympathetic.

Which means from the Roman perspective, Joseph was siding with a convicted rebel and therefore someone who may also turn against Rome.

So considering the risk involved, if Joseph wasn’t sure Jesus was truly dead.

Then would he risk everything to ask for his body?

For if Jesus was still alive when he asked for the body, then wouldn’t that have been interpreted as trying to rescue a dying man, rather than burying a dead body?

Secondly we know Jesus died because in verse 44 when Pilate hears this request from Joseph, we are told he was surprised to hear it.

He was surprised because normally someone crucified would take days to die.

Pilate did not expect Jesus to have died so quickly so he checks this with the centurion who was there at the crucifixion.

This centurion would have been the same one that stood at the food of the cross of Jesus.

He is the same centurion who witnessed how Jesus died and confessed: “Surely this man was the Son of God.”

Which meant that he was the best witness to the death of Jesus.

As a soldier and someone who has crucified others, the centurion knew when someone was dead.

So he reports to Pilate that Jesus has indeed died.

And when Pilate hears of this, he allows Joseph to take the body to be buried in a tomb cut out of a rock.

Jesus had truly died on the cross.

## Jesus has risen

So if Jesus had truly died, then the second fundamental point of Christianity has to be true.

That is, Jesus must have risen from the dead otherwise every Christian for 2000 years have been following a dead man.

Not the risen Son of God.

In verse 47, we are told that the women who had followed Jesus watched where his body was laid.

Their purpose was to go there after the Sabbath to anoint the body of Jesus with spices that was used for burial.

So when the first day of the week started, they made their way to the tomb.

But on the way they realized that they could not possibly move the stone that blocked the entrance of the tomb by themselves.

And as they considered this they look up and saw that the stone has been rolled away in chapter 16 verse 4.

And when they enter the tomb, all they see is a young man dressed in white robe sitting inside.

The body of Jesus is nowhere to be found.

And the young man says to them in **verse 6:**

*“Don’t be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”*

Mark doesn’t go into detail like the other Gospels about the interaction between the women and the angel.

Nor between Mary and the risen Jesus.

But Mark in his succinct way, states it as it is.

Jesus has risen from the dead and has left the tomb.

And this is how we know that Jesus has truly risen from the dead.

It wasn’t like people saw a vision of Jesus rising from the dead.

Nor was it that Jesus only appeared to 1 or 2 people and told them to tell others that he was alive.

But have a look at **verse 7**:

*“But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*

The angel commands the women to tell Peter and the other disciples to go to Galilee where they will be able to see Jesus.

That is, we know Jesus rose from the dead not just because of the empty tomb, but also because he showed himself to other people.

In fact Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people.

And all of them testified to his resurrection, some of them even unto their own death.

By their testimony we know that Jesus had truly risen from the dead.

# What was the point of his death and resurrection?

So having seen that Jesus had truly died and rose again.

What is the significance of his death and resurrection?

Why was the death and resurrection of this one man central to every Christian for the last 2000 years?

**Firstly his death achieved what Jesus promised it would achieve.**

Although there are many different things that the death of Jesus achieved.

I want to focus on two things that Jesus explicitly mentioned here in the Gospel of Mark.

In **Mark 10:45** Jesus says:

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Here Jesus speaks of his death as a payment or ransom to free others.

A ransom is simply a payment to set someone free.

So what does Jesus mean by this?

The apostle Paul writes in **Galatians 3:22**

*“But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.”*

According to the Bible, the whole world is a prisoner of sin.

Which means that the only thing we can do before God is to sin and continue to sin.

Because we are prisoners, even slaves, we have no hope of escaping sin unless someone frees us.

And that is what Jesus did by paying the price of our freedom by his death.

Because Jesus died, we are free from sin and free from God’s condemnation that is poured out against all sin.

**Which leads us to the next thing the death of Jesus achieved.**

In **Mark 14:36** Jesus prays:

*“Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

Here Jesus asks God to take away the cup that is before him.

But what does this cup mean?

It is a figurative image of God’s wrath and judgment.

In the Old Testament there are numerous instances where God pours out his judgment by making the wicked drink from his cup of wrath.

Which means that in his death, Jesus took that cup and drank it.

The judgment that we had to face, Jesus drank for himself so that we don’t have to drink it.

He drank the judgment that we had to face for the sin we committed.

**Now it’s great to read that Jesus died to free us and save us from God’s judgment.**

But if he had died and just remained dead.

Then there is a problem for us.

How can we be sure that what he promised is real? How can we know that his death really freed us?

Or that his death appeased the anger of God against us?

Which is why his resurrection is so important.

Jesus rose from the dead to show that what he said and promised was all true.

By this great miracle Jesus proves that our hope and faith in him is not in vain.

Everything he said and promised is true.

Just as he had promised his disciples in **Mark 14:28**

*“But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”*

The angel in Mark 16:7 tells us that Jesus indeed rose again and went ahead of them to Galilee.

This last fulfillment is an icing on the cake that proves what Jesus said and promised were all true.

The resurrection proves that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Messiah, the King.

And that he truly did die to save us from our sin and God’s judgment.

His resurrection validates and upholds everything he did and taught.

# How then will we respond?

So if Jesus truly died and rose again.

And if his death and resurrection has great significance for our standing with God.

Then how will we respond?

## Don’t just remember and feel sorry for his death

Firstly, don’t feel sorry for Jesus that he died.

When Joseph took his body, we are told he bought linen cloth to wrap his body up for burial.

What he did was a great expression of service to Jesus.

But if that was all that he expected.

If all that he saw was a dead body that needed to be wrapped up.

Then he has missed the point of the death of Jesus.

Likewise we are told that the women bought spices to anoint his dead body in the tomb.

If all they thought was that the body of Jesus needed to be properly treated for burial.

Then they too had missed the point of his death.

And if all that we remember about Easter is the dead body on the cross and then in a tomb.

Then we had missed the point of his death.

We are not called to pay respect to his dead body.

We are not called to feel sorry for the pain and agony Jesus suffered on the cross.

The point of Easter is not to feel sorry for Jesus and what he suffered in death.

The point of Easter is in the empty tomb.

The empty tomb which symbolizes the risen Jesus affirms to us that Jesus had done everything.

That he had accomplished what we could never do.

He died to set us free.

And he rose to prove he did just that.

## Respond to the risen Jesus

So now that we are free and raised to life with Jesus.

What will we do?

How will we respond?

Jesus tells us, no commands us to go and tell the world of his death and resurrection.

He has gone ahead of us into heaven and is waiting for us to follow.

In the meantime we are to witness to the world what Jesus had done.

Will we respond by saying nothing to anyone like the women?

Will we be afraid of the consequence of sharing the gospel?

Or will we act boldly like Joseph who dared to approach Pilate for the body of Jesus?

**And if Jesus has truly risen, then everything he promised is real and true.**

That means, death has no meaning because Jesus defeated death by his death.

Death no longer has meaning for us who believe because death is no longer final for us.

Because Jesus dealt with our sin in his death.

Because he took upon himself the judgment of God on himself for our sake.

We do not fear death.

Death is only the next step to heaven.

So what shall we fear?

The worst thing this world can do is kill us.

It can’t take away the salvation Jesus won for us on the cross.

Which means there is nothing we need to fear from this world.

# Conclusion

So let’s respond to Jesus like a people forgiven and justified before God.

Let’s respond to the perfect work of Jesus that had saved us from sin.

If Jesus is raised, then he is raised as king.

And if he is king, then there is only one thing we can do.

Respond to him in faith.

Trust his work on the cross and his resurrection.

If we think that there is something more we have to do for Jesus.

Like buying linen clothes or spices to anoint Jesus.

Then all that we are confessing is that Jesus is dead and it is up to us to do something for him.

But Jesus died because there was nothing we could do.

And his death completely and perfectly fulfilled what we cannot do for our salvation.

What’s more because he rose again, our hope is assured.

His resurrection proves that his death is enough.

Because he is risen, there is nothing more we need to do.

So let’s trust Jesus and obey his commands.

Follow his words by being bold in proclaiming his death and resurrection.

May God give us his Spirit of courage so that we may be bold and courageous in testifying to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.