

**EASTER 2021 – PART D****Mark 15:42 – 47**

As we begin this morning, we are beyond the crucifixion. It was an event like no other in history simply because of the three hours of darkness when Jesus absorbed all of the wrath of hell deserved by all of the individuals who have been saved and will be saved – which includes you and me. This was such a monumental three hours that there is no explanation that can do it justice. Nothing that I can say is sufficient to provide a reasonable level of comprehension of what really took place in those three hours. Those three hours may be the most monumental moments in all of history because of what God the Father was doing to the Son of God. I cannot even begin to imagine how much Jesus willingly and knowingly suffered in those three hours.

However, we now come to the burial and the resurrection. The resurrection in and of itself was a divine miracle that had eternal implications that are beyond our comprehension. Think of it this way. The crucifixion of Christ was not a miracle. It was something that happened to criminals every day in the Roman Empire. Placing Jesus in a tomb was no miracle for people died every day. Even though neither of these were a miracle, what we know is that God was certainly orchestrating all of these Passover events within His divine providence. He was using normal people to accomplish what He wanted to happen, and they did not even know that God was using them to fulfill His will.

The resurrection is something that was divinely supernatural. It is the cornerstone of our faith. Before we can actually call people to saving faith, we have to first give them the information and the content that we want them to believe – and that involves their mind. It involves providing information that people can understand. For instance, before I can call upon Christ as my Savior, I must understand that I need a Savior. That means that I have to understand that I am a sinner and I have to understand what sin is and how it relates to what God had to do to His Son and why. I have to understand that God exists and that because of sin that I am estranged from Him and that I am exposed to His judgment and wrath. The Bible never asks someone to take a blind leap of faith and just hope that God is out there – never, not once. The faith that God calls us to is a faith that is rooted and grounded in something that God provides as clear proof of the truth.

The Spirit of God never asks people to believe something that is absurd or irrational. So, what the Scriptures do is that they provide “proof” of what has taken place in order to help “persuade” someone of the truth. The problem that we all face in evangelism is that just because we give ample proof and evidence to someone to believe something does not guarantee that they will be persuaded of the truth we are presenting. Man by his very nature is very hostile to God, so no matter how convincing and how true our arguments may be is no guarantee that we can persuade someone of what we are saying.

There is what is known as the law of cause and effect. I.e., if something has happened, it is because something or someone else caused it to happen. Stated another way, an effect is something that has been caused by something or someone else. If I get up in the morning and the grass is wet, it is because of the dew or rain or a sprinkler. The wetness of the grass demands a cause. So, in what we are addressing, the resurrection was a supernatural event that had to have a cause, or someone or something who caused the resurrection. Men simply do not resurrect themselves. That would be a contradiction that someone who was dead could actually raise themselves from the dead.

I think the greatest story of divine providence (which is a supernatural outworking of God's purposes) is the story of Joseph and how God orchestrated and coordinated all of the events of Joseph's life to guarantee that he would be exactly where God wanted Him and accomplish exactly what God wanted him to accomplish to "save many people alive". Listen to [Genesis 45:5](#) and [Genesis 50:20](#),

**Ge 45:5 (NASB) "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.**

**Ge 50:20 (NASB) "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.**

What providence does is that it guarantees that God accomplishes everything that He has planned, purposed, promised, and prophesied, but He does it through the normal people and normal activities of life. The word "providence" comes from two Greek words – "pro" and "video", where "pro" means "before" and "video" means "to see". I.e., it means to see beforehand and make plans accordingly. For instance, in the providence of God, He used the greed of Joseph's brothers to save him. He used Potiphar's wife to get him thrown into jail. He used the dreams of the baker and the butler to get Joseph an audience with the Pharaoh who made him lord over everything, second in command only to Pharaoh. All of this was supernatural, but it was accomplished by ordinary people who were not even aware of what they were doing and of God's greater plan. This is exactly what was happening in the death and burial of Jesus Christ.

You have to appreciate that the Jews wanted Jesus dead because they did not want Jesus's body hanging on the cross on the Sabbath. That was a violation of the Mosaic law, so they asked Pilate that the legs of each of the three who had been crucified be broken. To speed up the death of someone who was crucified on a cross, the soldiers would actually take a very large iron mallet and break both legs of the criminals so they could not push up and get relief to breath. The Sabbath began at 6pm, so by breaking the legs of the three men, it would hasten their death so that they could be taken down and buried before 6pm. However, when the soldiers came to do that, Jesus had already died and was able to be taken down immediately. Actually there was a law in [Deuteronomy 21:22-23](#) that talked about what to do with the body of someone who had been executed. It reads as follows,

**Dt 21:22 (NKJV) "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,<sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.**

Generally, the Jews would execute a criminal by either stoning him or hanging him from a tree. For instance, in the story of the woman taken in adultery, they said this in [John 8:5](#),

**Jn 8:5 (NKJV) Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"**

So, if the Jews hanged someone from a tree as capital punishment, then they would allow the body to remain hanging for a while as an encouragement for others not to commit the same crime. However, the body was to be taken down and prepared for burial before 6pm because that marked the end of the day. What we know about Christ is that at 3pm that He died without either of His legs being broken. This is

significant because it was prophesied that none one of His bones would be broken. What happened is that His heart actually burst and that is why when the soldiers pierced His side that both blood and water came out revealing that Jesus was actually dead. [Zechariah 12:10](#) says this about His being pierced,

**Zec 12:10 (NKJV) "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.**

The Messiah would have no broken bones, but He would be “**pierced**”. Everything that was happening to Jesus on the cross was being providentially orchestrated by God to fulfill all of the details surrounding the crucifixion.

Now, concerning His burial, [Mark 15:42-47](#) gives us the details. [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#) is a very important passage because it clearly defines the gospel – of which burial is a part.

**1Co 15:3 (NKJV) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,**

Christ died, was buried, was resurrected. That is the gospel message – the death, the burial, the resurrection of Christ. If you were to break the gospel down, it really has two major components to it. Christ dying and Christ rising. Having said that, you may ask what the teaching on the burial is about. Well, it simply validated the reality of His death. When people die, we actually bury them in one form or another. We do not bury people who are still alive. So, seeing that Jesus was actually dead, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. V43 tells us that he was a “**prominent council member**”, i.e., a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin were the ones responsible for putting Jesus to death. [Matthew 27:57](#) says about Joseph of Arimathea that he was actually a disciple of Christ,

**Mt 27:57 (NKJV) Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.**

It seems from this verse that Joseph of Arimathea had actually been saved. In reality, it must have been very difficult for him to ignore what he knew Jesus had done – heal the sick, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the crippled, the leper, and even raise three people from the dead. [Luke 23:51](#) tells us that Joseph had not actually consented to the decision of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus.

**Lk 23:51 (NKJV) He had not consented to their decision and deed. *He was* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God.**

[John 19:38](#) says that he had become a secret follower of Christ,

**Jn 19:38 (NKJV) After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave *him* permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus.**

Obviously, Joseph had not quite determined yet how he was going to work out being public with his confession of Christ. For that matter, neither had the disciples. Peter had actually denied Jesus three times and except for John, all of the disciples had fled. I do not mean to be overly critical of Joseph, but

it is very difficult to be a secret follower of Christ for any length of time. It really is a kind of oxymoron. However, I know that in other parts of the world today that many Christians, say in China, are a part of the underground church movement there where they meet secretly to keep from being persecuted. So, why is Joseph of Arimathea so important to the story? Well, it is because we have to understand that if no one was available to take the body of someone who had been crucified that the body was thrown into Gehenna which was the city dump where things were burned. The criminals would normally have no formal burial, but just be placed in the trash dump to rot and eventually be burned. However, the Scriptures had prophesied that Jesus would be buried “**with the rich at His death**”.

The tomb where Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus was his own. It is important to understand that generally a burial tomb was used over and over in Israel at this time in their history. Once the body had decayed down to the bones, all of the bones would be collected and placed in a box that was called an “ossuary” and then someone else could use the tomb and the process would start all over. Joseph is probably assuming that by the time that Jesus’s body had decomposed that the tomb would then be available for him at his death. Now I want you to look at [Isaiah 53:9\(a\)](#) for a moment. This is the prophecy that was given about Jesus and where he would be buried.

**Isa 53:9 (NKJV) And they made His grave with the wicked-- but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.**

The NKJV does not really give the essence of what this verse means, so let me read it to you in the NASB and the NIV which capture the true meaning.

**Isa 53:9 (NASB) His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death...**

**Isa 53:9 (NIV) He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...**

The implication here is that the Sanhedrin had actually planned to simply throw His body in the city’s trash dump, but when it was all through, He was buried in a rich man’s tomb as a fulfillment of [Isaiah 53:9](#). Once again, this is divine providence orchestrating all of the details of these events down to the letter of Scripture. [Matthew 12:40](#) says,

**Mt 12:40 (NKJV) For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

In the Jewish language, “**three days and three nights**” represented any part of a day – in this case, Friday night, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning. So, what all of that means is that Jesus had to be buried before 6pm on Friday afternoon for Friday night to count. Then to make all of this even more intriguing, [John 19:39](#) says that Nicodemus also helped by bringing about 100 pounds of aromatic spices with which to wrap the linen cloth strips about the body of Jesus.

**Jn 19:39 (NKJV) And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.**

Apparently both Joseph and Nicodemus were friends. It would not surprise me to find out in heaven that Nicodemus actually talked with Joseph about his visit with Jesus in [John 3](#), and from there they continued their communication and eventually came to believe in Jesus being the Messiah. [Mark 15:47](#)

is an important verse as well when read in conjunction with [John 19:39](#) to describe who was actually at the grave site where Jesus was taken.

**Mk 15:47 (NKJV) And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother of Joses* observed where He was laid.**

Apparently, they had stayed at the cross after Jesus had died and when He was taken down, they followed Joseph to the burial site and had watched and observed what Joseph and Nicodemus were doing. [Mark 16:1](#) says,

**Mk 16:1 (NKJV) Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother of James*, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.**

Once it became 6pm on Friday afternoon, the law said that no one was allowed to do any work because it was the Sabbath in which they were not allowed to travel or work. So between 3pm and 6pm on Friday, Joseph and Nicodemus did not really have enough time from going to Pilate, then going back to take the body down, then taking the body to the empty grave to actually properly wrap Jesus's body for His burial. The women that were following noticed this and so they went home and bought and prepared their own spices so that they could guarantee that Jesus was properly anointed in His burial. [Luke 23:55-56](#) says,

**Lk 23:55 (NKJV) And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. <sup>56</sup> Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.**

[Luke 24:1](#) then says what they did on Sunday morning,

**Lk 24:1 (NKJV) Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.**

The first day of the week would have been Sunday, and that was the earliest that the Law allowed them to return because basically you were not allowed to either work or go anywhere on the Sabbath day.

There is one last detail to the story of the burial that needs to be seen and that has to do with the religious leaders. [Matthew 27:62-66](#) says the following,

**Mt 27:62 (NKJV) On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, <sup>63</sup> saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' <sup>64</sup> Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him *away*, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."**

**<sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how."**

**<sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.**

The reason that they requested that the tomb be guarded is because they were worried that the disciples would come and steal Jesus's body and then flaunt the idea that Jesus had actually been raised from the dead. They did this on the "**next day, which followed the Day of Preparation**" which was the Passover Sabbath. By doing this, they were breaking the Sabbath laws which they had so treacherously accused Jesus of violating. Their hatred and hypocrisy was so vehement that they were more than willing to break any part of the Mosaic law they had to ensure that what they had done could not be undone by the

disciples. In reality, they just forgot about what God could do. In [John 2:19](#) Jesus had said "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" The point is that the Pharisees knew that when Jesus said this that He was talking specifically about His resurrection. That is why in [Matthew 27:63](#) that they told Pilate that Jesus had testified that if they killed His body that in three days He would rise from the dead.

**Mt 27:63 (NKJV) saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'**

I was thinking that the chief priests and Pharisees would have been a lot smarter if they had never requested a guard or that the stone which was rolled up against the tomb actually not be rolled up to close off the tomb. That would have made their accusation that the disciples came and stole the body much more feasible and plausible to believe than putting a guard out there with a seal on the stone. John MacArthur said that by getting a Roman guard and sealing the stone that it made it practically impossible for Jesus's disciples to steal the body. A Roman guard was 16 of the most elite men that the Romans had. They would be similar to our Navy Seals or the Green Beret or the Army Rangers. Each man had a certain square footage to guard and if they failed in their duty in any way, their punishment was that they would be burned at the stake with their own clothes being used to start the fire. That was no small thing.

Next week we are going to see that when the women went to the tomb early Sunday morning that the Roman guard was no longer there, that the stone had been rolled away, that the tomb was not actually empty, and that there just happened to be an angel declaring that Jesus had risen from the dead. The tomb had all of the grave clothes still there and the cloth that had wrapped the head of Jesus had been removed so that everyone could see that Jesus was not there. Jesus had clearly prophesied many times that He would be killed and that He would rise from the dead. He said it over and over – "*I am going to die and I am going to be raised from the dead.*" He said it over and over and over. The resurrection was no accident, but the crowning moment of eternity for all who believe and we will address it next week.