

## How God Buried His Son

Scripture: Mark 15:42–47

Code: 41-83

Well let's open the Word of God then to the fifteenth chapter of the wonderful gospel of Mark. We all understand the importance of the cross. We looked at the details of our Lord's death. We're very familiar with all the explanations of the meaning of the cross that are given to us by the Apostles and their associates who wrote the books of the New Testament. We're very familiar with the importance of the cross, the priority of the cross, the wonder of the cross, the miraculous nature of the death of our Lord.

And we also are very well aware of the resurrection, even though we haven't arrived yet, added in Mark's gospel, we...not too many months ago did an entire series on the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians and looked at the meaning of the Resurrection of Christ in all of its implications and facets. We have studied the Resurrection in the other three gospels. We understand its miraculous nature. We understand its massive and eternal implications.

Those are two very, very significant marks in the life and ministry of Christ. There is one, however, in the middle of them, between the cross and the resurrection that is equally monumental, although it is usually overlooked. It is the burial of Jesus. Maybe you've never even thought about that. Maybe you've never even taken time to consider the significance of the burial of Christ. It had human elements, but was no less supernatural than what was happening at the cross, or the Resurrection. This is an amazing, supernatural, divinely orchestrated event. And I mean by that, the burial of Jesus Christ. You might even say that when He was dead in the body, He was alive in the Spirit and He basically coordinated His own funeral. He controlled every detail of His own burial.

The burial of Jesus is strong affirmation of His deity and His Messiahship, strong affirmation of the veracity of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the sovereignty of God and the purpose of history. All of that from the burial of Jesus.

For those who doubt the deity of Christ, the sovereignty of God, the veracity of Scripture, the burial alone would be enough to overturn such doubts. And while the crucifixion, of course, had miraculous elements in it, and the Resurrection was in itself a miracle without parallel, what happens in the burial is not miraculous, but it is nonetheless divine. How can that be?

There are two ways that God operates supernaturally in the world. Number one, is by miracles. A miracle is a means by which God accomplishes His purpose and does so by interrupting or suspending, or overruling the natural order of things. That's a miracle. It is an invasion, it is an interruption, it is an overturning of what is normal and what is natural. The natural law, the natural process is suspended and God injects Himself in a supernatural way that cannot be explained by any kind of human behavior, or any kind of analysis. Miracles are recorded for us in Scripture. We come, however, to understand they are very rare...very rare.

There is another way in which God accomplishes His will, non-miraculous but nonetheless

supernatural. In fact, if you will, even more evidently supernatural, even more amazing than a miracle. This we call providence...providence. Providence is an old theological word that is used to explain the fact that God accomplishes exactly what He plans, purposes, promises, prophesies, and He does it without interrupting, without suspending, without overturning the natural course of things. He does it by pulling together and orchestrating all the free behaviors of all people, all contingencies, all events, all actions and all reactions. That, dear friends, is a display of greater power than a miracle. Miracle is easy, you just suspend everything and interrupt with a divine act. The bigger issue is that God by His amazing understanding and power accomplishes His purposes precisely through the events and personal behaviors of all His creatures so that the free behaviors and actions and reactions and attitudes and motives, and choices are all aligned by God with meticulous precision to fulfill His precise will. And this goes on all the time. This is not rare, this is constant. The constant astounding wisdom and power of God in providence operates every millisecond and is seen dramatically in the amazing outcomes that always fit perfectly God's purpose and God's promise. And that's what you're going to see in the burial of Christ.

There are some people doing things around the burial of Christ. There are the neutral soldiers. There are the loving saints and the hateful religious leaders. They're all motivated by their own responsibilities, their own responses. They do what they choose to do because it's in their mind and by their will that they do it. But when it's all said and done, it accomplishes precisely the will of God. This is a great illustration of how providence works all the time.

Let's start then with the neutral soldiers, the indifferent soldiers and see how divine providence works with them. And before we get to the passage in Mark, I want you to go to the nineteenth chapter of John's gospel because we need to add a word from John and then a word from Matthew, and throw in a few from Luke along the way to get the full picture.

Now when I go through the gospel of Mark, as you well know, I become kind of a Bible story teller, right? This is not like preaching through Romans where there are pedantic sequential arguments, this is a story. This is a true history and I'm merely delving in to all the elements of it so that I can tell you the full story in all its richness. And for us, the story of the burial has to begin in the nineteenth chapter of John. In verse 30 we find this statement, "He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit." At about three o'clock on Friday afternoon, in April of A.D. 30, Jesus gave up His life...He gave up His Spirit. In John 10:17 and 18, He said, "No one takes My life from Me, I lay it down of Myself." After all, Revelation 1:18 says He has the keys of death. He willed and brought about His own death, and in an abnormal amount of time. He had been crucified at nine in the morning and He gave up His life at three in the afternoon. Typically speaking, victims who had been scourged and crucified would survive on the cross two, three days. For Jesus, it was six hours.

When Jesus gave up His life, the two thieves, one on each side, were still alive. Verse 32 of John 19, "The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and the other who was crucified with him." Why did they break their legs? Because they were still alive and they wanted to hasten their death. But when it came to Jesus, they didn't break His legs because He was already dead. It could have been expected that all three of them may have survived into the second day, and the third day.

But, there was a problem. The Jews wanted Jesus dead. Look at verse 31 of John 19. "The Jews, the Sanhedrin in particular, because it was the Day of Preparation, that is the Friday, Preparation for the Sabbath which begins at sunset and starts the next day, the Sabbath day which runs from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, it is Friday, the Day of Preparation for the Sabbath, so that the bodies

would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath. And particularly on that Sabbath which was a High Day. They asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

What is prompting this is Deuteronomy 21: 22 and 23, it's a text in the Old Testament in which God instructs Israel that if someone's life is taken and there were, you understand, don't you?, capital crimes and death penalties to be executed in the theocratic kingdom, and when that occurred, a life was taken and a body was then suspended for people to see through the day of the execution, as a warning of the dangers of violating the Law of God. However, that text says that the bodies must be removed before sundown on any day of an execution, particularly on the day before a Sabbath, they were being fastidious about this.

So the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin want the three dead bodies down before the Passover Sabbath. This isn't just any Sabbath, this is the Passover Sabbath. They don't want those bodies to defile their Sabbath. They're very selective about their defilements, aren't they? They're killing the Son of God, and they've also managed to enter Pilate's Praetorium , they've gone to Pilate and asked Him to do this. And you remember earlier, they wouldn't go in, they stayed outside so they wouldn't defile themselves at the trial of Jesus. Now they've gone in, they want those bodies down. They are pernicious hypocrites; murdering the Son of God, but then removing the bodies so as to scrupulously avoid any traditional ceremonial defilement.

Now if somebody didn't die, how would you hasten their death? They had a means, that means was called *crucifragium*. This is how it worked. A person hanging on a cross, one foot across the other, one nail through would survive as long as that person could push up with his legs so that he could receive oxygen into his lungs, or pull up with the wounds on his hands so that he could breathe. When the person could no longer do that, the person would be asphyxiated. So the means of a very rapid death was to take a massive iron mallet and crush the femurs of both legs. The body would then hang limp, be unable to breathe, and the victim would die, a combination of partly shock and partly blood loss, but mostly asphyxiation, a gruesome horrible death.

The Jewish leaders say, "We want that done, we want that done to all three of them." Verse 32 then says, "The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other who was crucified with Him, two thieves. But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they didn't break His legs."

Why was He dead? He was dead because He gave up His own life. He willed Himself dead.

How did it actually happen? What was the pathology of His death? Verse 34 might give us a hint. "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear," this is just to be absolutely certain. "And immediately blood and water came out." Under certain stressful circumstances, the heart can actually burst, causing blood to spill into the pericardium, mixed with lymphatic fluid. Apparently that's what happened. Jesus literally willed His own heart to burst. Psalm 69:20 says, "Reproach has broken My heart, ruptured My heart."

You say, "What's the importance of this?" The importance of it is given to us by John in verses 35 to 37, "And he who has seen has testified," this is John referring to himself, "and his testimony is true." He was there, right? The others weren't there, Judas wasn't there, the ten weren't there, Peter wasn't there, they had all forsaken Him and fled. But John had been at the cross, remember, committed to

Mary, and Mary to him, he was there and he was there down to this very moment and so it was he who has seen and testified and his testimony is true and he knows that he's telling the truth so that you also may believe."

I am telling you the truth, I saw with my own eyes, He was dead, they did not break His legs, and they did pierce His side." That is eyewitness testimony, and that is important, verse 36 and 37, "For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture." The first scripture was Psalm 34:20 which said, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." Wow! Why? Because Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 say, "The Passover Lamb cannot have a broken limb."

You know what the temptation would be to somebody who was going to offer a sacrifice, not to give the best lamb, but to give the one with the broken leg. That's...that's what the prophet warned not to do, you remember. Don't bring God a lame sacrifice, you bring Him the best...the spotless lamb without blemish. You couldn't offer to God a lamb with a broken limb, and nor would Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, have a broken bone.

This happened to fulfill that prophecy. And, verse 37, again another scripture says, and this is Zechariah 12:10, "They looked on Him whom they pierced." Which is to say, that the Messiah would also be pierced." The actions of the soldiers, the witness indifferent, neutral soldiers on the body of Christ were actions that they did by virtue of their own will and their own motives and the impulses of their own minds and yet were under divine control to authenticate Scripture related to the Messiah to the very letter and establish the veracity of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and the reality of His Messiahship.

Also, the soldiers knew a dead body when they saw one. They were executioners and thus, the certainty with which they determined that Jesus was dead and the proof of it, blood and water gushing out of His side, means that He was really dead and that also means that He really came back to life. These soldiers operate with a measure of freedom, and they do the will of God.

Now let's go back to Mark and we go from the indifferent soldiers to the loving saints. This is a magnificent portion of Scripture for its pathos and compassion. Verse 42, "When evening had already come," Jesus had just died about three in the afternoon, back in verse 39, "He breathed His last." Verse 42 says, "Evening has come, it's late in the afternoon, it's the preparation day, it's still Friday, the day before the Sabbath. Sabbath doesn't start till the sun goes down around six or so." The three are dead. Thieves have had their femurs smashed. And Jesus was already dead and blood and water seeping perhaps from His side.

Verse 43 says, "A man came, named Joseph of Arimathea." Joseph was a very common name...very, very common name. It was the name of the Lord's earthly father. Arimathea is a village that we really don't identify. Luke says Arimathea, a city of the Jews. Some think it's Ramathaim-zophim, the birthplace of Samuel. Some have suggested it's another village. We don't know for sure, but it does identify this Joseph and he perhaps was known to the church and the believers, and this would separate him from other men named Joseph. He came.

Here's the interesting thing about him, he's a prominent member of the council. Whoa! He's a prominent member of the Council. He's a member of the Sanhedrin. It's so notable that Matthew mentions him and Luke mentions him and John mentions him as well as Mark. And this is his only

appearance anywhere in Scripture. The story is brief but the story is full and it's wonderful. It's a story of salvation, an unexpected testimony of faith in Christ by a member of the Sanhedrin, set against the rejection of that Supreme Court of Israel and the whole nation.

So you can add to the thief on the cross and the centurion and some of the soldiers, another testimony of salvation. We would say that the thief was an outcast, though he was a Jew. And the Romans would be considered outcasts, hated by the Jews. They're the outsiders. But here's an insider, a member of the council, and not just a member of the council, but a prominent member of the council. We don't know if he was a priest, one of the chief priests. We don't know if he was a scribe, one of the lawyers, theologians, or if he was an elder. We don't know if he was an official priest or a lay person, but he was one of the seventy plus the high priest that constituted the Sanhedrin.

Luke says this about him. "He was a good and righteous man." He was a good and righteous man. Same word used in referring to Jesus as a righteous man. Jesus was righteous by His own righteousness. Joseph was righteous because the righteousness of God had been credited to him. One was righteous by nature, the other was righteous by grace.

He was a true believer. Matthew says, "Joseph, a disciple of Jesus." John says, "Joseph, a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews," particularly the Sanhedrin of which he was a member. He had come to follow Christ, to believe in Christ. We could say that he was probably a true Jew, he would be very much like Zacharias, Elizabeth, Anna and Simeon who were introduced to us early in the gospel of Luke, who were believers in the true God, who were penitent believers, who were true believers who were saved people and waiting for the Messiah and fully engaged in the wonderful promise of the Messiah having come and been born. He was one of those. He was a true Israelite.

More than that, he was not just a true Israelite, he was a disciple of Jesus Christ. He had come to believe that Jesus was the one promised...the one promised. In fact, I love this in verse 43, it says, "He was waiting for the Kingdom of God." He was waiting for the Kingdom of God. That's a true Jew who understood the Old Testament promise of salvation and a Kingdom in the correct way and was waiting for the Kingdom to come and had come to the conviction that the Kingdom had come because the King had arrived, and the King was no other than Jesus.

But he understands the price if he acknowledges this publicly. So at first, he's keeping it quiet. However, in Luke 23:51 it says, "He had not consented to their plan of action...he had not consented to their plan of action." My guess is that when the Sanhedrin met in the middle of the night, you remember, early Friday, that he probably wasn't there. They had a quorum, they accomplished what they wanted to with regard to sentencing Jesus to death for blasphemy. But he had not consented to it. Either he was there and didn't consent, or he was absent. But he didn't consent to it. He was the one dissenting member because both Matthew and Luke say they all agreed to His death. Was he the only one who didn't, this Joseph, who was waiting for the Kingdom of God?

What did he think now? I thought He was the King. I thought this was the Kingdom. You can imagine what kind of a week Joseph had, can't you? When Jesus came into the city, he would have been exuberant, he would have been ecstatic, he would have been thrilled. And when Jesus attacked the temple, he would have seen that as a righteous act on Tuesday. And then as Jesus was teaching the truth in the temple for the first time in centuries, he would have been thrilled at that. And then as it all

began to go bad and it ended up on the cross and Jesus ends up dead, all that anticipation, all that hope must have really begun to disappear. He must have been feeling like he was falling into a black hole. He has to be heart-broken because he thought Jesus would be the one to usher in all the Old Testament promises.

But he loves Jesus and out of the love of his heart, sympathy and compassion, he's willing to acknowledge that he has been a disciple of Jesus. He steps out, verse 43, he gathered up courage. Why? Because he knew he was going to be seen. The Sanhedrin were there. This is all happening in a small little area and they're going to be in there with Pilate too, talking to Pilate about killing the people on the cross, breaking their legs so they don't go into the Sabbath. They knew and he knew they would know. He gathered up courage, courage to be exposed to the Sanhedrin and also courage to be exposed to Pilate who was going to execute this man. And he went in before Pilate.

By the way, that verb, "he gathered up courage," means exactly that, to dare. And he asked for the body of Jesus. I think that's just one of the really, really sad moments. The Romans would typically give the body, if it was requested, to the family. If the family requested it and there was some reason to honor that request, the Romans would do that. Criminals who had no such family to request their bodies were thrown into Gehenna, thrown into the dump to be burned, no burial, no honor. There was no one to come and ask for His body. The women were around but fearful. The disciples had disappeared. And here is one man who steps up and asks for the body. Verse 44, "Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time." I mean, he assumes that He's not going to be dead. "And he summoned the centurion and questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph."

Now let me give you the scenario a little bit. Joseph went in to see Pilate. And there's no doubt that the Sanhedrin had just gone out. It was just after, according to John 19:38, it was just after the Jews had asked Pilate to break the legs of the three that Joseph showed up and asked for the body. And Pilate doesn't know if He's dead because the guys that went to decide that, hadn't come back. So it tells us in verse 44 that he wondered if He was dead, and so he summoned the centurion to find out and the centurion found out and brought back the message and Pilate, verse 45, ascertaining that He was dead, granted the body to Joseph.

What is Joseph going to do? What did he do? Did he go to the crucifixion site? Surely he did. And did they lay the cross on the ground? And was it Joseph who pulled His feet through the nail and pulled His wrists through the nails? Was it Joseph who pulled the crown of thorns off His head?

The word used, "he granted the body," is *ptoma* in Greek, it means corpse. Joseph has a corpse in his hand. Why is he doing this? Why is he exposing himself for a dead person who can't fulfill everything he hoped? What motivated him?

Well you might say, humanly speaking, that he was motivated by his love for Jesus. He just didn't want to see His body thrown away, didn't want to see His body dishonored. He didn't want to see it in the dump with all the criminals. Maybe he wanted the dignity of an appropriate burial. Sure he did. He even gave Him his own tomb, tomb, we find out, no one had ever been in so that He could have a burial like the burial of a king in an unused tomb. Tombs were used, and reused, and reused and reused and reused.

So how did that work? You put the body there on a shelf. A tomb hewn out of rock might have a number of shelves. Put the body on the shelf. When it decomposes down to the bones, you collect the bones, put them in a box called an ossuary, take the box somewhere else. Put that...and put the next person who dies on the same shelf. That's how they did it.

Joseph was then going to give Him a shelf in a tomb where no one had ever, ever been. That's kind of a burial fit for a king. So maybe it was all that love and affection. Maybe it was a sense of guilt that he hadn't opened up and acknowledged that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ, but he kept his distance. Maybe all that is true. Certainly he was motivated to give honor to Jesus. So from a human perspective, there were things working on him that made him do this.

But that's not really what's going on here. He is, in his own freedom, and his own independent motive and action, doing what he wants to do but in the end, he's fulfilling God's will.

Isaiah 53:9 says, that the one who was bruised for our iniquities, the one who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, the Lord Jesus Christ, that great 53rd chapter of Isaiah, it says, "His grave was planned to be with the wicked." That's what Isaiah prophesied. His grave was planned to be with the wicked, He would be thrown like the rest of the refuse, like the rest of the criminals on the fires in the dump. But Isaiah 53:9 says, "His grave turned out to be with the rich."

How could Isaiah know that, that it would be planned to be with the wicked and He would die rather and be buried with the rich? Joseph didn't hurry because he feared violating the Sabbath. That wasn't an issue to him. He had already violated the Sabbath by going in to see Pilate. He was already defiled in anticipation of the Sabbath. What's he doing?

He's being moved along by divine power. He's moving at divine speed. It's not just about an honorable burial for Christ. It's about getting Him off the cross, in the grave, on Friday so that He's there Friday, Saturday, and Sunday because He promised that He would be three days in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12 verse 40, "The Son of Man will be three days, three nights and a day and a night is simply a Jewish way to refer to any part of a 24-hour period. He will be there for three days. That meant that Jesus had to be buried before the Sabbath began at sundown.

I don't know if Joseph even knew Jesus had promised that He would be three days and three nights in the earth. Joseph was acting on his own. So in verse 46, he was given permission, he bought a linen cloth, and that's the way they buried people, the Jews, they didn't embalm them. Nothing internal, they just wrapped strips around the body and then they put spices, aromatic spices, and then put a linen garment, a linen cloth, took Him down. Which means to me that he actually took Him off the cross, whether the cross was lowered, he took Him down. And John in 19:38 says he also took Him away. This is amazing. "And after taking Him down, cleaning off the blood and the sweat and the dirt, he would have wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock."

It must have been an absolutely wrenching experience for him. We keep reading about him...by himself here, but there's another unlikely lover of Jesus who shows up. Go back to John 19, verse 38, "After these things, Joseph of Arimathea being a disciple of Jesus, a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body." That's true, he took it down, he took it away. But, verse 39,

"Nicodemus..." Nicodemus, remember him? Yeah, the one who came to Jesus by night and had the discussion about being born again. Nicodemus who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds weight." That volume would be fit for a King. And myrrh and aloes were both essentially drawn from plants and were aromatic to mitigate the stench of a decomposing body. They took the body of Jesus in verse 40 and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices as is the burial custom of the Jews.

There were linen strips around the body. With the spices and then a linen, large linen piece over it.

Well we've had a thief saved. We've had some Roman soldiers saved. And then we've had a Sanhedrin member, and now we've got, according to John 3, THE teacher in Israel. Nicodemus, another follower of Christ, who somewhere between John 3 and John 19 was born again. "And they laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock," and Matthew 27:60 says, "It was Joseph's own tomb." And Matthew says in that same passage, verse 57, "That he was a rich man." He was a rich man. And John says it was near Golgotha. So they got Him...Joseph gets Him off the cross, heads to his nearby tomb in which no one has ever laid, gets Jesus there and Nicodemus joins him and together they prepare the body and get it in the grave. And it's still Friday...it's still Friday. They're doing what their hearts tell them to do.

I can't even comprehend what they were thinking, the sadness of those moments. And the price they would pay for public disclosure of their love for Christ. "After they had placed Him there," the end of verse 46, "he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb."

John 19:41 says, "This tomb was in a garden...in a garden." It was all to honor Christ, from loving followers, and to prevent thieves from getting into the tomb. Grave robbing was a big deal. And in ancient times, people tended to be buried with some of their valuables. People are today even, have been through history. If anybody had broken in to the tomb of Jesus to get the valuables, they would have been disappointed. All He had He was wearing, and they took that away from Him, His executioners did at the cross. The only thing they would have found was a loin cloth and the wrappings and the spices, for He had nothing.

The most loving, careful, honorable burial the two men could offer the Lord, what a funeral for Jesus. Only two came to His funeral. No hymn was sung. No prayer was prayed. No sermon was preached. He was placed in the grave and the stone was rolled across the front. And all of this, according to verse 42, happened on the Preparation Day on Friday.

Verse 47 ends this passage with a comment that's so important. "Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses," who were mentioned, by the way, back in verse 40, as being there at the cross. Remember they started out near the cross and eventually they moved far away, looking on from distance, verse 40 says. Well they're still there when Joseph shows up to take the body. They're still there, mourning in sadness, paralyzed by the disappointment, they're still there. And when they see Joseph, this man they don't know, take the body, they don't know what's going on, they followed, verse 47, they were looking on to see where He was laid. They followed Joseph as he took the body to the nearby grave, very near Golgotha. Luke, by the way, adds that Joanna was there, and others were there. And we have the name of Salome back in verse 40. This is the group of women, you'll remember, I told you followed Him from Galilee and had been loving disciples of Jesus.

Why did they follow? Obviously they loved Him, they wanted to see what was happening. They watched these men and they watched these men do the preparation, whatever they did. They didn't want to be outdone in that. Mark doesn't tell us anymore than that they watched. But Luke 23:56 says this, "They returned to their homes and prepared their own spices."

They weren't going to be outdone by a couple of strangers. They wanted to have their moment to show their love to the body of Jesus. So the last couple of hours on that Friday, they're back home, mixing spices, wherever they were staying, to bring back to the tomb. They couldn't come back on the Sabbath, it's forbidden. The Sabbath was a day when you couldn't go places and do work. But they were back early Sunday morning, according to Luke 24:1, with their spices. And, boy, were they in for a surprise when they arrived. Luke says, "They, however, rested on the Sabbath."

The action of the soldiers and the action of these two men, done by their own motives with the exigencies and circumstances that were occurring around them, accomplished the will of God, His legs are not broken, His side is pierced, and He's in the grave on Friday. This is divine providence at work.

There's one other group and its just...a brief comment will suffice. Matthew 27, the hated leaders, they made a serious miscalculation, serious miscalculation. They were worried that the disciples were going to come and steal His body to make it look like He rose from the dead. So they wanted to make sure they couldn't do that. Verse 62, "On the next day, the day after the Preparation, that's on the Sabbath, the chief priests...the Passover Sabbath...and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate." Wow! They're defiled again. "And they said, 'Sir, we remember that when He was still alive, that deceiver said after three days I am to rise again.'"

Can I just add a note? They knew when He said, "Destroy this temple, in three days I'll raise it up," He was talking about His body because they affirm it here. "And when they tried to indict Him for saying He was going to destroy the Herodian temple, they knew they were lying. He said He's going to rise in three days, therefore give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

"Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard.'" Gave them soldiers. "Go make it as secure as you know how."

"They went out, made the grave secure, and along with the guard, set a seal on the stone." Frankly they would have been better off to leave the thing open, then there could have been all kinds of explanations." "Oh, they stole His body." They could have discredited the resurrection. But what they did was, they made it impossible for the body to be stolen and consequently when the resurrection occurred, the only explanation was a resurrection. These hypocrites who don't want a dead body to defile their Sabbath, meet on the Sabbath with an unclean Gentile and they want to stop this deceiver from a worst deception, a fake resurrection, so they seal up the tomb so no one can possibly have access to it and it's under Roman guard. And therefore, they set up the only possible explanation when He isn't there, He rose from the dead.

Some say, "Ah, Jesus didn't really die. It's the swoon theory." Really! He didn't die, so He really didn't rise. There are whole books written on that.

Well the Roman soldiers knew a dead man when they saw one. And some say the women went to the wrong tomb. Yeah, they went to a tomb that had never had anybody in it. That doesn't fly, because the women followed Joseph and watched him place Jesus in the right tomb. And some say the disciples stole His body. That's not going to happen. That won't fly 'cause the tomb was sealed and guarded against that possibility.

All these features of His burial show the providential power of God.

Well, next Sunday morning, we'll come back for the last eight verses of Mark, the glorious truth of the resurrection. And then next Sunday night, I'm going to explain the ending of Mark and the ending that was added later and why it was added and how it fits and why Mark ends the way it ends. That will be it.

Now for tonight, we're going to have a Q&A and you can ask me questions about ministry, about all the years of ministry, this isn't necessarily a theological inquisition, although you may want to ask some of those questions but we can talk about ministry and talk about the years, and we'll have a good time tonight. Come to the resurrection next time.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word. How can we say anything other than thank You, thank You, we praise You for the glory of Your truth and how it coheres everywhere on the pages of Holy Scripture. Clearly a supernatural book written by one divine holy unerring author, namely the Holy Spirit. What a treasure this truth is.

We thank You that even those things which the indifferent people do, the loving people, the hostile people, all fit together to accomplish Your purpose. This is how we live our lives. We who belong to You are in the middle of constant, endless, relentless, providence as it works in our world and in our lives to accomplish Your perfect ends, for Your glory and our blessing. What a privilege. We thank You in Your Son's name. Amen.

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