

Mark 15:42-47 – The burial of Jesus

We are certainly sinners, who deserve God's judgment. Our only hope is that Jesus came into the world, lived a pure life, suffered and died for our sins on the cross, was buried and rose again. There is nothing better to study than this!

1. The Sabbath Day

Like in Swahili, the Jews counted their hours beginning at evening – 6 hours different to the Western way. The new day began in the evening. God's law said that any hung man was cursed and must not remain hung up through the evening (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). Jesus was cursed for our sins, and so to fulfil Scripture this law had to be obeyed (John 19:31). But what would they do with his body? In the evening it would be the Sabbath, when the people were commanded to rest. God raised up a man, Joseph of Arimathea, to make sure that the Sabbath day was honoured. He worked quickly, even using his own tomb (John 19:41-42). The women also honoured the Sabbath (Luke 23:56). We see that the earliest believers kept this day for God's glory. We should too.

2. A Secret Believer

Joseph from Arimathea came to bury the body. He was one of the Jewish leaders, who had not agreed with their evil actions (Luke 23:51). He was a secret believer – secret because of fear. But now that Jesus was dead, he lost his fear and came out boldly. There are more believers than we realise – so be encouraged! Are you a secret believer? Joseph did not remain in secret, and neither can you (Luke 9:26). Joseph was God's man for the time. The disciples were too afraid, and the women did not have authority; but God raised up Joseph. He will always raise up a man when he needs one!

3. A Death Confirmed

Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. He asked the centurion to confirm it. Crucifixion was often a slow death. But Jesus had died to atone for sins, and when he had finished that work, he had no more to do, so he gave up his spirit. The centurion testified he was truly dead. Jesus' death was real, and here was a testimony to that. He went ahead of us into the grave. We do not need to fear the grave any more, because he has already entered and defeated it.

4. A God-honouring Burial

The body of Jesus was embalmed with spices, and buried according to the Jewish customs. God made the human body and it should be treated with respect, not burnt like it is rubbish. But there was no expensive ceremony, and the ceremonies in Kenya which make people poor are not good! Again we see the women watching – they followed Jesus to the end, even though they still lacked some understanding. God receives us, even with weak and faulty faith, as long as it is faith in him alone. Now Jesus began to be honoured again. He lay down, ready to rise. His shame was over, and his glory lay ahead.