

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

There is a sense in which when Christians gather every Sunday around the world we are celebrating the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The Bible calls Sunday the Lord's Day because it is the day he rose from the grave. Every aspect of a Christian's life revolves around Jesus and his rising physically from the dead. In fact, if you wanted to summarize what Christianity is all about into 4 simple words it would be: the resurrection of Jesus. And, of course, on Easter we celebrate that Jesus conquered death and sin and Satan by rising from the grave. If you are a Christian you have every reason to have hope for the future because through faith in Jesus you have eternal life with him. If you are not a Christian, Jesus tells you to come and follow him and have eternal life.

This morning as we celebrate the resurrection, I want us to turn our attention to Mark's gospel and just walk through this part of Scripture together. I want to point our attention to the magnitude of Jesus's sacrificial death and then, of course, focus on the utter amazement of his resurrection. Easter is about celebrating the resurrection of Jesus - his rising from the grave. But to understand why his resurrection is significant, we have to understand why his death is significant. And in order to understand why his death is significant, we need to understand why there is sacrifice in the first place.

Many people who are not familiar with Christianity really have no idea why Jesus who died 2,000 years ago has anything to do with them and their standing before God. And while rising from the dead is clearly miraculous, they don't know exactly how sacrifice fits into the equation.

It's like a little kid who loves going to see the fireworks on the 4th of July, but they don't know why people light fireworks. They don't know why this is significant. In the same way, a lot of people know that Jesus died and rose again, but they don't know why or why it should matter to them. So before we get to our passage here this morning, I want to set the stage for where sacrifice came from and why it's necessary.

1) The Whole Bible Points to a Need for Sacrifice.

So we need to understand that sacrifice really began at the very beginning of the Bible. In **Gen. 1-2** God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did, what would happen? They would die. In fact, God says to them "You will surely die" - death is a certainty.

So within the very first command, we see that God has a standard of righteousness and expects people to obey perfectly. And any violation of his command is deserving of death.

Rom. 3:23: the wages of sin is death.

No matter how big, no matter how small, all sin is deserving of death. You say: "Really, God demanded death because Adam and Eve ate some fruit?" Absolutely. Here was God who had provided absolutely every single thing they needed in this lush, amazing Garden. He gave them only one thing they couldn't do and they rebelled against God.

Imagine if you had a mansion and asked someone to house sit for you for a week. And you told them to look after the place: eat whatever they want, use whatever they want. Your place is there place. But just one thing: don't eat the ice cream in the downstairs freezer. You get home, and what have they done? They did the one thing you told them not to do. The fact that it's a few dollars worth of ice cream doesn't make the offense smaller. It actually makes it worse. You gave them your whole estate to do whatever and enjoy whatever and this one thing you asked them not to do they did in calculated rebellion against you. It's not about the ice cream, it's about the rebellion.

Here were 2 humans created from dust, whom God breathed into life, whom God had given lavish provision for and they rebelled against God. Really, if you read about half way into **Gen. 3** what you really expect is God just to kill them. That's what he said he would do. That would be the just consequence for their wicked rebellion. That's what sin is, it is rebellion against God. When we sin, just like Adam and Eve, we are defying God.

Really the amazing part of **Gen. 3** is that they *don't* die. At the end of **Gen. 3** who does die is an animal in their place. We're not told what kind of animal, but we know God kills this animal instead of killing Adam and Eve. God himself sacrifices an animal to cover the consequence of their sins - their nakedness. And so from the opening chapters of the Bible we see substitutionary sacrifice. An animal dying in place of someone else.

In the very next chapter the sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, brought sacrifices to God. So it seems sacrifices became a common thing. And God had apparently even laid down some rules for how to offer them because Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's was not and God rebukes Cain. You couldn't just sacrifice any way you wanted to. God had rules. Sacrifices to God - true sacrifices - covered for peoples' sins. The animal died instead of the person. **And** they had to follow a certain pattern that God laid out.

Moving a little farther along, we see that Job - one of the earliest Bible figures - sacrificed animals every day for each member of his family just on the off chance that they had cursed God in their hearts. Again, we see a clear connection to a death, a sacrifice for sin, in a systematic way. But with Job what we see is also the idea of a priest. Someone who regularly performed the sacrifices on behalf of other people. Someone who knew others' sin and acted on their behalf.

And the Bible goes on this way for a while. It starts vague but slowly becomes more clear. Last Friday was the anniversary of Passover. It was the day God delivered the Jews out of slavery in Egypt. They had to sacrifice a lamb, cover the doorways of their houses with the blood to avoid the wrath of God and be delivered out of slavery in Egypt.

It's no coincidence that Jesus was sacrificed on Passover. It's faith in his blood that covers us from the wrath of God and delivers us out of slavery to sin.

From Passover, God really systematized the sacrificial system. You can read through Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers to get a feel for just how comprehensive the sacrificial system became. What animals were to be sacrificed, who could do it, where they could do it, under what circumstances, on and on. And these parameters guided the Jews for 1400 years until Jesus came.

And then someone happened shortly after Jesus. Just 40 years after Jesus rose from the dead, Rome came in and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and sacrificial system - just as Jesus said they would - and the Jews haven't sacrificed a thing since.

All that to say that since literally the beginning of creation the people of God have understood clearly that there was a connection between their sin and death. All sin deserves death. We understand in the NT that not only does it deserve death, but it deserves the everlasting wrath of God in hell as well. This is the severity of sin. We also see that sin doesn't just go away. It doesn't just get erased. Everyone has to face the penalty for the sin. And it was ingrained in the minds of the Jews that God's method of dealing with sin was sacrifice.

Here was the problem with the sacrifices - and everyone knew it was a problem: The sacrifices didn't really solve the underlying issue of sin. We know that because the Jews had to keep making them over and over and over. Tens of millions of sacrifices throughout history and they had to keep doing it. And the people never changed. And the sin never went away. And it's almost as if God knew that. He knew that this would not be a lasting remedy.

Fast-forward to Jesus on the Friday morning he was crucified. **Read 12-20**

2) Here we see beginning of The Kingly Sacrifice.

What is going on here? What's going on here is that for the last 3 years this man named Jesus has been doing amazing things. He's been doing thousands of miracles, healing multitudes of people from disease, casting out demons, teaching with authority. He has been proclaiming himself to be the Son of God and many people believe it. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, God in the flesh. Messiah or Christ means anointed one - it's the chosen one of God who was going to come as a conquering King to rule the nations.

But the religious leaders weren't having any of that. Jesus was a threat to their power. He was a threat to their authority. He constantly attacked their hypocrisy and they finally had enough. And they came up with an interesting strategy to get rid of Jesus. In Roman times anyone who set himself up to be a king over and against Caesar was considered a traitor and would be killed. So if people want to think Jesus is king, fine. Let him be a "king" and let him get killed. And the stage was set because the week before his resurrection - on Palm Sunday - Jesus came into Jerusalem to shouts that he was the king.

If you remember, when Judas betrayed Jesus and the soldiers brought him back to the Jewish leaders, they couldn't get witnesses to agree on how to accuse him. That's when Jesus - knowing what he had to go through - basically gave them a helping hand. He admitted to being the Christ, the Messiah, the chosen King of God. That was all the evidence they needed to take him to the Romans for death.

So the Jews took Jesus to the Romans - to Pilate - to charge him with treason. Jesus very plainly told Pilate that he was a king but Pilate didn't believe that Jesus was any sort of threat. But Pilate was under pressure from the crowds to kill Jesus. So he caved. He had Jesus beaten - scourged. A brutal whipping where the victim's back was torn open. His soldiers gave him a purple cloak, the cloak of a king. Caesars usually wore a laurel wreath - a crown made out of soft evergreen leaves. So Jesus' crown, as it were, was a crown of sharp thorns meant to tear up his head. Matthew's gospel says they gave him a reed to act as a king's staff. Here it says they beat him with the reed and mockingly bowed down to him. Here is your King.

What happened here? Why is this happening to the King? What happened was that the King of the Jews entered the Holy City Jerusalem but he didn't come to establish an earthly throne, he came to make the ultimate sacrifice. The sacrifice that all the other sacrifices pointed toward. And the sacrifice had begun. Blood is now being spilled. **Read 21-26**

Roman crucifixion was one of the most brutal forms of death ever. Painful, physically exhausting, long - it could take up to a few days for someone to die on the cross exposed to the elements. It was shameful as the victim was usually naked. Roman law called for those to be crucified to carry their own cross. It was probably not the whole cross as we know it. It was likely just the horizontal cross piece that they would affix to the vertical piece once the person's hands were nailed on. Here it seems that Jesus was already in so much shock that he couldn't carry this piece the short distance outside the city so a man named Simon carries it for him.

Side: His sons - and maybe Simon himself - likely became believers which is why Mark makes special note of the family unit here.

Jesus was offered wine and myrrh which were often given to people to numb the effects of pain. But Jesus would have none of that. He would feel the full agony and pain of death as he suffered. This was part of taking the full weight of the wrath of God on his body.

And so about 9am - the third hour - they crucified him. They nailed him to the cross and lifted him up to the post in the ground. His crime, as it was supposed, was that he was the King of the Jews. And the irony wasn't lost on anyone. **Read 27-32**

Not only is Jesus the dying King, he is being mocked while it's happening. He's even being mocked by the other two guys who are dying!

Jesus is now up on the cross and time is short. But what's going on on the cross is nothing less than amazing. **Read 33-39**

So just as darkness covered the land of Egypt as God poured out his wrath on the Egyptians, so too darkness covered the land as God poured out wrath on his Son. We know this was not an eclipse - it couldn't have been. Passover happens during a full moon, an eclipse can only happen on a new moon which would be 14 days away. This was divine judgment being poured out on Jesus, the divine Son of God that was emphasized by the shroud of darkness that covered the land.

What's amazing is that Jesus explains for us exactly what is going on when he says, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" This is a loaded phrase.

Have you ever been in a situation where you quoted a line from a movie to your friend? The movie line just made sense in the situation and all it took was quoting that one line for your friend to understand what movie you were talking about, what scene, what the situation was and why the quote was important and how it related to the situation? We do that all the time, don't we? The NT does that all the time as well in almost the exact same way.

That's what's going on here. Jesus is quoting just one line out of **Psa. 22**. It's a Messianic psalm about the suffering of **King David**. King David is being persecuted by his close friends, who taunt him by saying "He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord deliver him," his body is in utter despair, his friends are dividing his clothing.

Jesus quotes this one line to make a connection between the suffering King David and the suffering King of Kings. The psalm itself opens with the words "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

What is happening here is that on the cross God the Father forsook the Son. He poured out the full weight of judgment for sin on him. Jesus is drinking in the full cup of the fury of the Father for the sins of his people.

1 Pet. 2:24: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [the cross], that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

Gal. 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."

We sang in the song: "The sins of man and wrath of God, have been on Jesus laid." That's what happened on the cross.

And although God is a Trinity - Father, Son, and Spirit: 3 in 1 - and cannot ultimately be divided, on the cross the Son felt the weight of the fury of the wrath of God the Father for sin. What David wrote about in **Psa. 22** was just a glimpse of the true forsaking that Jesus felt on the cross.

Sadly, these bystanders see all this suffering and all this pain and they - like many today - think Jesus is a joke. They see no connection between what is happening and the need for sacrifice. And the whole time Jesus is actually narrating what is happening. He is explaining it to them and they don't even see it.

See, all of the sacrifices before Jesus were just pictures of this one sacrifice. It wasn't that the Jews kept getting it wrong and so God came down and did something different entirely. No, all of those sacrifices prior to Jesus simply looked forward to what we are reading right now. This is the true sacrifice to which all the others pointed to.

When you're sitting at a restaurant sketching your dream home on a napkin, that's just a picture of the real home you hope build one day. The napkin is 2-dimensional, doesn't have color, or decorations, doesn't have the smell of dinner, or the sound of rain outside. But if someone were to ask you what you were drawing you could say "this is my dream home" and they would know what you meant. The picture isn't the true home, it's a picture of it. In the same way, the OT sacrifices were just a napkin sketches of the true sacrifice of Jesus to come.

What Jesus has just done is what all of history looked forward to. It is God through Jesus paying for sins. It is Christ the King laying down his life for the people he made. And almost everyone missed it when it happened.

And by the way, no one expected him to rise. He had told his disciples many times over the last few months of his life that he would be betrayed and killed and rise again and none of them understood it. And we see that clearly here. **Read 40-47**

This is the normal course of events for someone who died. It's the burial process. Since this was the Friday before the Sabbath burial had to happen quickly. So they did what they could and they would have to finish with spices and perfumes that covered the odor of decay later.

There have been some over the years who think that Jesus didn't really die on the cross. Which is really one of the most ridiculous claims ever made. If the Romans knew how to do anything, they knew how to kill people. And someone who went through the trauma that Jesus went through would not have survived long even if they were taken down before they died. None of his followers anticipated the resurrection.

No, Jesus was dead. He there was no hope of life within him. And this is important: Jesus didn't just die. Jesus was slaughtered just like sacrifices in the OT were slaughtered.

Friday was a dark day, but as has been said: Sunday is coming.

3) The King is Alive.

This is the most glorious truth in all of history. That the crucified Son of God didn't just die for sins, but he rose again. And you say: "What do I do with that." How does that affect me?

Imagine if there was grizzly bear loose in your neighborhood one night. You heard it growling and there was a bunch of commotion. So you grab a gun, lock your family inside and head out with your neighbors to get the bear. And you do. The bear's down - dead forever - or so you think. The bear's laying there and so after some congratulation you and your buddies head home for the night. You agree to take care fo the rest tomorrow. Except that when you wake up the next morning the bear is gone.

You call around to your neighbors: what'd you do with the bear? Where'd you put him? And it becomes obvious: no one took the bear. The bear is on the loose.

What are you feeling right about then? It's probably the same thing that the disciples were feeling. The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, who was just killed in an agonizing and humiliating death is on the loose. He is not dead. He is alive. And no one knows where he is right now, but they're going to see him soon.

The Bible uses 4 words to describe their emotions: alarmed, trembling, astonished and afraid.

Why would the disciples be afraid? They didn't crucify Jesus. No, but they all betrayed him. They all turned their back on Jesus who they knew was the Son of God. They were as guilty as anyone. And they're standing before this angel telling them that Jesus has raised from the dead. And they're going to see him soon.

This is the sobering reality of the Bible: That one day day every single person will give an account of their lives to the risen Jesus.

Acts 17:31: God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed [Jesus]; and of this he has given assurance to us all by raising him from the dead.

How do we know we will give an account? Because the tomb is empty. The God-Man Jesus Christ isn't in there. He rose and later ascended into heaven and one day he's coming again and all people will give an account to him.

You probably have one of 2 reactions to that reality. One is you're afraid. That causes you some trouble. Either you don't want it to be true because you don't like the implications of what that means for your life, or you know it's true and you're not sure what to do.

In that case, here's what you do: You turn to God and ask his forgiveness. You acknowledge your sin and guilt before him and trust that they only way your sins can be forgiven is through the sacrifice of Jesus. You turn from your sinful life and you follow the Son of God. That's the only hope anyone has to have their sins forgiven.

The second reaction to the risen Jesus is joy. He was dead but now he's alive and he is coming back. And we wait for him with eager longing, eager expectation. Why?

Because the resurrection of Jesus is what gives us hope.

The sacrifice is finished.

The tomb is empty.

Our sins are gone.

Praise the Lord!

Pray