

## BEHOLD THE CROSS

Mark 15:46 ... "Then he bought fine linen, took him [Christ] down [from the cross], and wrapped him in the linen. And he laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb."

Mark tells us that after Jesus died a follower of Christ, named Joseph, obtained the government's permission to bury him. The verse says that he "took him DOWN," which suggests that the cross remained upright. Jesus was nailed to the cross while it was on the ground. It would have taken several strong guards to lift the cross up and set it in a hole in the ground so everyone could witness his death. But there is no record that Joseph had help in removing Christ's body from the cross, so in all likelihood, he just removed the nails from his hands and feet, and lowered the body to the ground.

On this Easter Sunday, the day we set aside to celebrate Christ's resurrection, I would like to turn your attention to the cross that probably still stood on the hill called Golgotha as Jesus laid in his tomb during the Sabbath. There are passages and Christian songs with lyrics that tell us to "behold the Lamb," referring to Christ on the cross dying for our sins. I want you to also behold the empty cross. I want you to close your eyes and imagine it covered in Christ's blood. Imagine the holes in the wood beams into which heavy nails were driven through Christ's hands and feet. In fact, after his body was removed there would have been parts of his flesh, muscle and bone imbedded in those nail holes.

Most people you know, die peacefully in their beds of disease, heart failure, or old age. They rest in caskets for a few days then they are buried. There is no blood or brokenness for loved ones to see and face. But, have you ever driven along a road where someone was killed in an accident or shooting? For days you can still see the victims' red blood staining the pavement. If you are a loved one of that victim it will be an extremely difficult sight for you to see and be reminded of that tragic event.

If God had taken Christ home without the horrible torture and death he was allowed to suffer, perhaps by hanging or poison, it might be hard for us to see the tragedy of his death. The significance of his death for our sins, might be difficult to grasp. But, the cross stands as a testimony of the extremely awful circumstances in which Christ paid for our sins. We are saved by Christ's blood, some of which remained on the cross after he was buried. You cannot visit the cross today, but you can visit it in the account of the eye witnesses to the crucifixion: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John who wrote about it for our benefit. The cross is important to our faith, to your salvation, and for the world. But, without the blood, the cross is just some pieces of wood that might have been used for firewood or to build furniture. Behold the cross. PLEASE. It is the gateway to your relationship with Christ, your reconciliation with the Father, and your future in heaven.

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