

## JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

### A FRIEND OF JESUS

#### TEXT:

**Mark 15:43-46:**

***<sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counselor, which also waited for the Kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.***

***<sup>44</sup> And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead.***

***<sup>45</sup> And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.***

***<sup>46</sup> And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.***

It was a very dark with the church of God and with the house of Christ; for the Lord Jesus was dead. All the disciples forsook Him and fled. These are the sad words of Jesus, and they had come true.

***John 16:32b: ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone:***

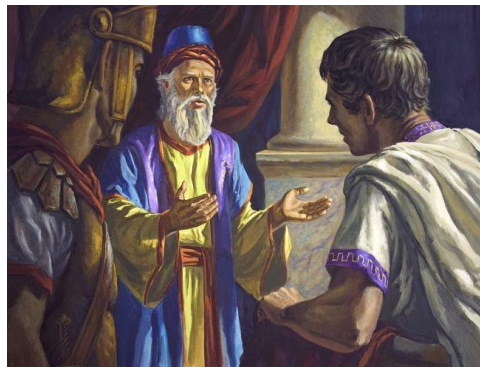


He was dead upon the Cross and His enemies hoped there was an end of Him, while friends feared that it was even so. A few women who had remained about the Cross, true to the very last, were found faithful unto death – but what could they do to obtain His sacred body and give it honorable burial? That priceless flesh seemed to be in danger of the fate which usually awaited the bodies of malefactors. At any rate, the fear was that Jesus' body might be hurled into the first grave that could be found to shelter it.

At that perilous moment, Joseph of Arimathea, of whom we never heard before, and of whom we never hear again, suddenly made his appearance. He was the very man needed for the occasion – a man of influence – a man possessing that kind of influence which was most potent with Pilate. He was a rich man, a counselor, a member of the Sanhedrin, a person of weight and character. Every evangelist mentions him and tells us something about him, and from them we learn he was a disciple – “a good man and a just man, who also, himself, waited for the Kingdom of God.”

Joseph had been a secret believer in Jesus. The Bible does not tell us why, only that he ***also waited for the Kingdom of God (Mark 15:43)***. The account given in

**Mark 15** suggests that Joseph of Arimathea was there when Jesus hung on the Cross and died, because he went boldly to Pilate asking for the body of Jesus after Jesus died. The Bible states that Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. He verified His death with the centurion before releasing Jesus' body to Joseph. This suggests Joseph had been present.



Let us learn from this that God will always have His witnesses.

The Truth of God will not fail for lack of friends. It may be with the Church as when a standard bearer fainteth and the host is ready to melt with dismay; but there shall be found other standard bearers, and the banner of the Lord shall wave over all. As the Lord liveth, so shall His Truth live; as God reigneth, so shall the Gospel reign even though it be from the Cross. Tell it among the heathen that the Lord reigneth from the tree!

### Two Josephs . . .

There was a Joseph for Israel in Egypt, and there was a Joseph for Jesus on the Cross. A Joseph acted to Him for a father's part at His birth and another Joseph arranged for His burial. The Lord shall not be left without friends.

## Hannah pours out her soul before the Lord . . .

There was a dark day in the Old Testament history when the eyes of Eli, the servant of God, had failed him. Worse still, he was almost as blind mentally as physically for his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. It seemed as if God must forsake His Israel.

But who is this little boy who is brought in by his mother [Hannah]? This tiny child who is to be left in the sanctuary is to serve his God as long as he lives. This pretty little man who wears the coat which his mother's hands have lovingly made for him – Look, ye that have eyes of faith, for the prophet Samuel is before you – the servant of the Lord, by whose holy example Israel shall be led to better things, and be delivered from the oppression which chastised the iniquities of Eli's sons.

Joseph of Arimethea speaks a warning to us. He was a disciple of Christ, but secretly - perhaps because of for fear of the Jews. Fear can lead us to conceal our faith, **and that is an evil thing**. **Be a disciple, by all means, but not secretly.**

## Being A Disciple . . .

You miss a great part of your life's purpose if you are a secret disciple because of the fear of man, for the fear of man brings a snare. If you are the slave of such fear it demeans you, belittles you and prevents you from giving due glory to God. Be careful to give honor to Christ and He will take care of your honor.

Many men are, by nature, very bold; some are a little too much so that they become intrusive, self-assertive – not to say impudent. I have heard of a certain class of persons who rush in where angels fear to tread. They are fearless because they are brainless. Let us avoid fault in that direction.

Many, on the other hand, are too retiring – they have to bolster up their courage even to say a good word of the Savior whom they love. If they can do so, they fall into the rear rank; they hope to be found among the victors when the spoil is divided, but they are not overly ambitious to be among the warriors while they are braving the foe. Some of these are true-hearted, notwithstanding their timidity. cf. Foxes Book of Martyrs, some thought to stand because of boasting, recanted and vice-versa.

## Have you openly confessed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Did Joseph lose out by his secrecy? – For you see, he did not live with Jesus as many other disciples did. During that brief but golden period in which men walked

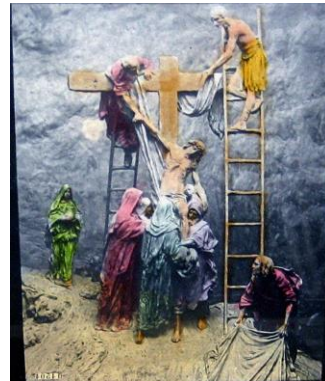


and talked, ate and drank with Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea was not with them – he was not among the 12 as possibly he might have been. He lost many of those familiar talks with which the Lord indulged His own after the multitudes had been sent away. He missed that sacred training and strengthening which fitted men for the noble

lives of primitive saints. How many opportunities he must have missed, too, of working for the Master and with the Master?

We cannot help but wonder if Joseph's life would have been different if he had not followed Christ from afar off. I pray to God that such reflections as these would fetch out our truly faithful, honorable Christian men who hitherto have hidden away among the stuff and have not come to the front and stand up for Jesus.

What was it that transformed Joseph of Arimathea from a secret follower of Jesus to boldly approaching Pharaoh and asking for His body? It was the power of the Cross. Is it not remarkable that all the life of Christ did not draw out an open affirmation from Joseph of the truth of what he believed? Our Lord's miracles, His marvelous discourses, His poverty and self-renunciation, His glorious life of holiness and benevolence all may have helped to build up Joseph of Arimathea in his secret faith, but it did not suffice to develop in him a bold affirmation of faith. The shameful death of the cross had greater power over Joseph than all the beauty of Christ's life.



Now, let us see – you timid, backward ones, whether the Cross will not have the same influence over you today. I believe it will, if you carefully study it. Joseph, a friend of Jesus, no longer remained a silent follower of His Lord Jesus after having witnessed His murder, but now came forward to side with the holy and just.

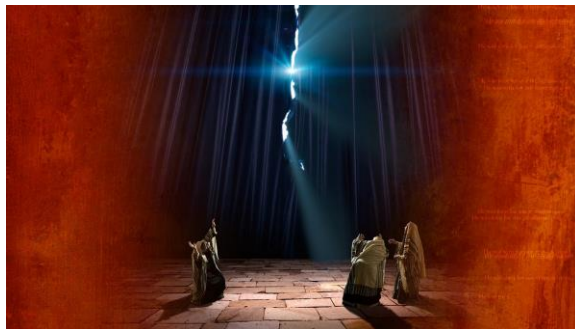
Since Jesus, as He hung on the Cross, spoke not for Himself, but was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, Joseph is bound to open his mouth for Him. If Jesus answered not, but only breathed out prayers for His murderers, the honorable counselor must acknowledge Him. The sun has owned Him and veiled its face in sackcloth.



The earth has owned Him and trembled to the very heart at His sufferings.

Death has owned Him, and yielded up the bodies which sepulcher [a grace in rock] and hitherto detained.

The Temple owned Him, and in its horror rent its veil, like a woman who is utterly broken in heart by the horrors she has seen.



**Therefore, Joseph of Arimethea must own Him;**

**Joseph cannot resist the impulse.**

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