

John 19:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

Analysis

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave (Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἠρώτησεν τὸν Πιλάτον Ἰωσήφ ὁ ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας, ὢν μαθητὴς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ· καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν ὁ Πιλάτος, Meta de tauta ērōtēsen ton Pilaton Iōsēph ho apo Harimathaias, ōn mathētēs tou Iēsou kekrymmenos de dia ton phobon tōn Ioudaiōn, hina arē to sōma tou Iēsou· kai epetrepsen ho Pilatos)—Joseph was μαθητὴς...κεκρυμμένος (mathētēs...kekrymmenos, 'a disciple...hidden') διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων (dia ton phobon tōn Ioudaiōn, 'because of the fear of the Jews'). Yet crisis prompted courage: he openly requested Jesus's body. **He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus**—Joseph's public action 'outed' him as Jesus's follower, risking his Sanhedrin position (Mark 15:43 identifies him as 'an honourable counsellor').

Fear had kept Joseph secret, but Jesus's death catalyzed courageous faith. Sometimes God allows crisis to move secret disciples to public confession. Joseph's costly obedience—risking reputation, position, ritual defilement—demonstrates transformative faith. His unused tomb (Matthew 27:60) fulfilled Isaiah 53:9: 'with the rich in his death.'

Historical Context

Arimathea was likely Ramathaim-zophim, Samuel's birthplace (1 Samuel 1:1), about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. As a wealthy Sanhedrin member (Luke 23:50), Joseph had resources and influence to request the body and provide burial. Roman law typically allowed families to claim crucifixion victims' bodies; Pilate's permission shows respect for Joseph's status.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Joseph's transformation from 'secret disciple' to public confessor demonstrate that crisis can strengthen rather than destroy faith?
2. What modern forms of 'secret discipleship' do Christians practice to avoid social or professional cost?
3. How did providing an honorable burial for Jesus demonstrate both love for Christ and courage to associate with a condemned criminal?

Interlinear Text

Μετὰ	δὲ	ταῦτα	ἠρώτησεν	τὸν	Πιλᾶτος	ὁ	Ἰωσήφ	ὁ
after	And	this	besought	G3588	Pilate	G3588	Joseph	G3588
G3326	G1161	G5023	G2065		G4091		G2501	
ἀπὸ	Ἀριμαθαίας	ὦν	μαθητῆς	τοῦ	Ἰησοῦ	κεκρυμμένος		
of	Arimathaea	being	a disciple	G3588	of Jesus	secretly		
G575	G707	G5607	G3101		G2424	G2928		
δὲ	διὰ	τὸν	φόβον	τῶν	Ἰουδαίων	ἵνα	ῥῆεν	τὸ
And	for	G3588	fear	G3588	of the Jews	that	he might take away	G3588
G1161	G1223		G5401		G2453	G2443	G142	
σῶμα	τοῦ	Ἰησοῦ	καὶ	ἐπέτρεψεν	ὁ	Πιλᾶτος	ἦλθεν	
the body	G3588	of Jesus	and	gave him leave	G3588	Pilate	He came	
G4983		G2424	G2532	G2010		G4091	G2064	
οὖν	καὶ	ῥῆεν	τὸ	σῶμα	τοῦ	Ἰησοῦ		
therefore	and	he might take away	G3588	the body	G3588	of Jesus		
G3767	G2532	G142		G4983		G2424		