

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 ἡρώτησεν τὸν Πιλᾶτον Ἰωσὴφ ὁ ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας, ὃν μαθητὴς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἵνα ἄρη τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ· καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν ὁ Πιλᾶτος, Meta de tauta ērōtēsen ton Pilaton Iōsēph ho apo Harimathaias, ὃn mathētēs tou Iēsou kekrymmenos de dia ton phobon tōn Ioudaiōn, hina arē to sōma tou Iēsou· kai epetrepseν 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 ἡρώτησεν τὸν Πιλᾶτος ὁ Ἰωσὴφ ὁ
after And this besought G3588 Pilate G3588 Joseph G3588
G3326 G1161 G5023 G2065 G4091 G2501

ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας ὡν μαθητὴς 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 ἥρεν 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 ἤλθεν
the body G3588 of Jesus and gave him leave G3588 Pilate He came
G4983 G2424 G2532 G2010 G4091 G2064

οὖν καὶ ἥρεν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ
therefore and he might take away G3588 the body G3588 of Jesus
G3767 G2532 G142 G4983 G2424

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org