

Luke 23:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor;
and he was a good man, and a just:

Analysis

And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just. Luke introduces Joseph of Arimathea with **behold** (ἰδοῦ, *idou*), calling attention to this significant figure's unexpected entrance. **A man named Joseph** (ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι Ἰωσήφ, *anēr onomati Iōsēph*)—the use of *anēr* (man) rather than *anthrōpos* (person) emphasizes his male status and standing, while "named Joseph" indicates he was a known figure.

A counsellor (βουλευτής, *bouleutēs*) identifies Joseph as a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council of 71 members who had just condemned Jesus to death. This makes his actions all the more remarkable. The word *bouleutēs* means a senator, councilor, or member of a deliberative assembly—a position of significant power and prestige in Jewish society. Joseph was a religious and political leader, part of the aristocracy.

Yet Luke immediately provides moral qualifications: **he was a good man, and a just** (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος, *anēr agathos kai dikaios*). *Agathos* (ἀγαθός) means good, upright, honorable—describing moral character and virtue. *Dikaios* (δίκαιος) means righteous, just, innocent—the same word used for Christ Himself and for those justified by faith. This is the highest moral commendation Luke could give. Joseph's goodness and justice stood in stark contrast to the Sanhedrin majority who conspired to kill Jesus. The description prepares readers for Joseph's courageous action—his character equipped him to do what others feared.

Historical Context

The Sanhedrin was Judaism's supreme council, combining legislative, judicial, and executive authority under Roman oversight. Composed of chief priests (Sadducees), scribes (legal experts), and elders (aristocrats), it met in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple complex. Membership required wealth, education, and political connections. Joseph of Arimathea, as a bouleutēs, was part of this elite group, yet he 'had not consented to the counsel and deed of them' (v. 51)—he opposed Jesus's condemnation.

Matthew 27:57 adds that Joseph was 'a rich man' and 'Jesus's disciple,' while John 19:38 notes he was a disciple 'secretly for fear of the Jews.' This detail illuminates the precarious position of secret believers within the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus (John 3, 7:50-52) was another secret disciple on the council. Both risked everything by revealing their allegiance through Joseph's request for Jesus's body—they could be expelled from the Sanhedrin, excommunicated from the synagogue (John 9:22), and lose social standing and wealth.

Arimathea (Ἀριμαθαία) is likely Ramathaim-zophim, Samuel's birthplace (1 Samuel 1:1), about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem in Judean hill country. Joseph's prominence in his home city and Jerusalem made his public association with the crucified Jesus all the more significant. His 'goodness and justice' enabled him to overcome fear and honor Jesus in death, fulfilling Isaiah 53:9: **he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.**

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Joseph's position on the Sanhedrin yet opposition to Jesus's condemnation illustrate the tension facing secret believers in hostile institutions?
2. What does Luke's emphasis on Joseph being 'good and just' teach about the character required for courageous discipleship?
3. How might Joseph's example encourage Christians in positions of influence within secular or hostile organizations?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἰδοὺ, ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι Ἰωσήφ βουλευτῆς ὑπάρχων
And behold man named Joseph a counsellor and he was a good
G2532 G2400 G435 G3686 G2501 G1010 G5225

ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος
man And a just
G435 G18 G2532 G1342

Additional Cross-References

Acts 10:22 (Righteousness): And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

Acts 11:24 (Good): For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Acts 10:2 (Parallel theme): A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Luke 2:25 (Righteousness): And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

