

Matthew 14:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Analysis

'And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.' John's disciples performed final service: retrieving the body, providing burial, and reporting to Jesus. Despite danger (approaching Herod's prison to claim executed prophet's body required courage), they honored their master. The phrase 'told Jesus' demonstrates right response to tragedy and loss: bring it to Christ. Reformed theology sees this as model: in grief, persecution, injustice, turn to Jesus. John's disciples had been followers of Jesus's forerunner; now they come to Jesus Himself—appropriate transition. The verse also highlights Jesus's humanity: He received news of His cousin's execution with human grief (v.13 records He withdrew to lonely place). This pivotal moment intensified Jesus's awareness of His own approaching suffering—John's fate foreshadowed His own. The account ends with John buried and disciples turning to Jesus—John had prepared the way; now Jesus's ministry continues. Though John's voice was silenced, God's purposes advance. The martyrdom of God's servants doesn't stop God's plan; it fulfills it.

Historical Context

Jewish law required burial, even of executed criminals, before nightfall (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). John's disciples courageously approached Herod's officials to request the body—risky given association with executed prophet. Josephus confirms John's disciples existed as distinct group even after John's death. Some apparently became Jesus's disciples (Acts 19:1-7 mentions those who

knew only John's baptism). The transition from John to Jesus was appropriate: John had testified 'He must increase, I must decrease' (John 3:30). By bringing news to Jesus, disciples acknowledged Him as John's successor and superior. Jesus's response—withdrawing to deserted place (v.13)—shows His humanity: He needed time to process grief. Yet compassion interrupted His mourning: crowds followed, He taught and healed them. Throughout history, God's faithful servants have died or been martyred, yet God's purposes continue through others. Reformation proceeded despite Hus's execution; mission advance despite martyrdoms; church grows despite persecution. John's pattern repeats: faithful witness, suffering, death, yet ultimate triumph through Christ.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you respond to tragedy, loss, or injustice—do you follow John's disciples' example of bringing it to Jesus?
2. What does this account teach about God's purposes advancing despite (or through) the suffering and martyrdom of His servants?
3. How should Christians honor those who've suffered or died for faithfulness to Christ?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	προσελθόντες	οἱ	μαθηταὶ	αὐτό·	ἥραν	τὸ	σῶμα,
And	came	G3588	disciples	his	and took up	G3588	the body
G2532	G4334		G3101	G846	G142		G4983

καὶ	ἔθαψαν	αὐτό·	καὶ	έλθόντες	ἀπήγγειλαν	τῷ	Ἰησοῦ
And	buried	his	And	went	and told	G3588	Jesus
G2532	G2290	G846	G2532	G2064	G518		G2424

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:2 (Parallel theme): And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

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