

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Mark: Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God

Part III: The Perfect Sacrifice Of Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God, Mark 11:1-15:47

X. Joseph Of Arimathaea's Example Of Eventually Publicly Supporting Jesus At The Risk Of Persecution (Mark 15:42-47)

I. Introduction

- A. Mark's Gospel was written by a man who was rebounding from having abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) due to his faithlessly mishandling some unspecified difficulty.
- B. That difficulty may have been the fear of being persecuted for publicly promoting the Gospel, a fear caused by witnessing the opposition Paul had faced in the ministry on Cyprus in Acts 13:8.
- C. Thus, Mark's rebound from defeat is like Joseph of Arimathaea's rebound, for as a former secret believer in Jesus due to fear of the Jews, Joseph came out publicly in support of Jesus at the risk being persecuted for it.
- D. We view Mark's account of that rebound by Joseph of Arimathaea for insight and edification for us today:

II. Joseph Of Arimathaea's Example Of Eventually Publicly Supporting Jesus At The Risk Of Persecution.

- A. After Jesus died at 3 p.m. (Mark 15:34-37; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 189), the "evening" occurred, the time between 3 p.m. and sunset, and if Jesus' body was to be buried by a Jew, he had to hurry and entomb the body before sunset when the Sabbath arrived when he could not lawfully do such work, Ibid., p. 191.
- B. Accordingly, Joseph of Arimathaea, a reputable member of the Sanhedrin (Ibid.) who "waited for the kingdom of God," meaning he was a devout Pharisee (Ibid.), he "summoned up [the] courage" (*tolmao*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 829) and went to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body, Mk. 15:42-43.
- C. This "summoning up [the] courage" verb is fitting here, for John 19:38 reveals that Joseph of Arimathaea had been a secret disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews. This fear is explained in John 9:22 that reveals how even the parents of a blind man Jesus healed were afraid to give public credit to Christ for healing their son, for the Jews had decided if anyone confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, he would be excommunicated from the synagogue, so Joseph of Arimathaea of the Sanhedrin risked losing a lot for showing kindness to Jesus' body!
- D. Nevertheless, realizing he would eventually be judged by God, and likely distraught over the Sanhedrin's move to condemn Jesus to die, Joseph "summoned up the courage" to try to obtain so as to bury Jesus' body:
 - 1. Joseph was not related to Jesus, so his asking "the imperial magistrate" of Rome for the body of a man to whom he was not related risked his getting a reprisal from the magistrate, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 - 2. In addition, Jesus had been crucified for "treason" (Ibid.) as a usurper of the role of Caesar, further enhancing the risk of harm to Joseph of Arimathaea were he to ask Pilate for Jesus' body, Ibid.
 - 3. As a Jew, Joseph of Arimathaea also risked ceremonial defilement in handling a dead body, what would have created tension in his relationship with other upstanding Pharisee associates who would be appalled that he would submit to defiling himself for a man who had been condemned to die by the Sanhedrin, Ibid.
 - 4. Most of all, Joseph of Arimathaea risked open hostility from fellow members of the Sanhedrin who would accost him for treating Jesus honorably after they had sentenced Him to die (Mark 14:55-65). That in turn could lead to Joseph's being removed not only from the synagogue, but also from his seat on the Sanhedrin to the harm of his business and finances, for he was also a wealthy man (Matthew 27:57), Ibid.
- E. When Joseph asked Pontius Pilate for Jesus' body, Pilate marveled that Jesus might already be dead, for crucifixion victims usually died after several days of agony on the cross, Mark 15:44a; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Mark 15:44. Pilate thus asked the centurion overseeing the crucifixion if Jesus had already died, and when the centurion verified that He had died, Pilate gave the body to Joseph, an "exceptional" act likely since he believed that Jesus had been innocent, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., Mark 15:44b-45.
- F. Thus, Joseph of Arimathaea bought fine linen, took the body down from the cross, wrapped it in the linen, laid it in a tomb hewn out of a rock and rolled a stone over the tomb's door, with several women disciples of Jesus watching him, Mark 15:46-47. This action marked Joseph for life as a supporter of Jesus, and he disappears from Scripture likely paying a price in terms of persecution, but all to his great eventual and eternal reward!

Lesson: *Though he first failed to give public allegiance to Jesus for fear of the Jews, at Jesus' death, Joseph of Arimathaea summoned up the courage to risk all he had in this life to do God's will -- to obtain Jesus' body for burial and to bury it, and with that act, he likely paid a great earthly price but gained a great heavenly reward.*

Application: *May we summon up the courage to do God's will in spite of persecution in view of our eternal reward.*