

Joseph of Arimathea
is a Bible character
we often overlook



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He appears only once in Bible history and then disappears but his deeds are important enough to be recorded in all four of the gospels

- Matthew 27
- Mark 15
- Luke 23
- John 19



By closely considering him and what he did, we can learn some very important lessons



Joseph of Arimathea



Who Was Joseph of Arimathea?

Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?

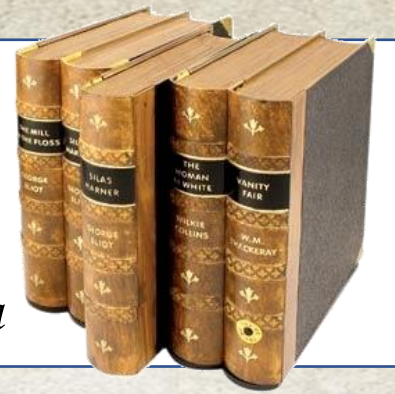


He was from the city of Arimathea, “a city of the Jews” (Luke 23:51)

- It is believed to be a small city in the territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim

Arimathea

International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia



“A city of the Jews,” the home of Joseph in whose sepulchre the body of Jesus was laid. Its identity is the subject of much conjecture. The Onomasticon of Eusebius and Jerome identifies it with Ramathaim-zophim in the hill-country of Ephraim (1 Sam 11), which is Ramah the birthplace and burial-place of Samuel (1 Sam 1:19; 25:1) and places it near Timnath...

Tribe of Ephraim



MANASSEH

Mt. Ebal

Mt. Gerizim



Pirathon

Taanath-shiloh

• Ebenezer

Arumah

• Janoah

• Aphek

Fari'a River

Tappuah

Lebonah

GAD

• Zeredah

EPHRAIM

• Shiloh

• Arimathea

• Tinnath-serah

Mt. Gaash

Jeshanah

• Baal-hazor

Jordan River

DAN

• Bethel

Ataroth-addar

• Lower Beth-horon

• Naarath

• Upper Beth-horon

BENJAMIN

Scale of Miles



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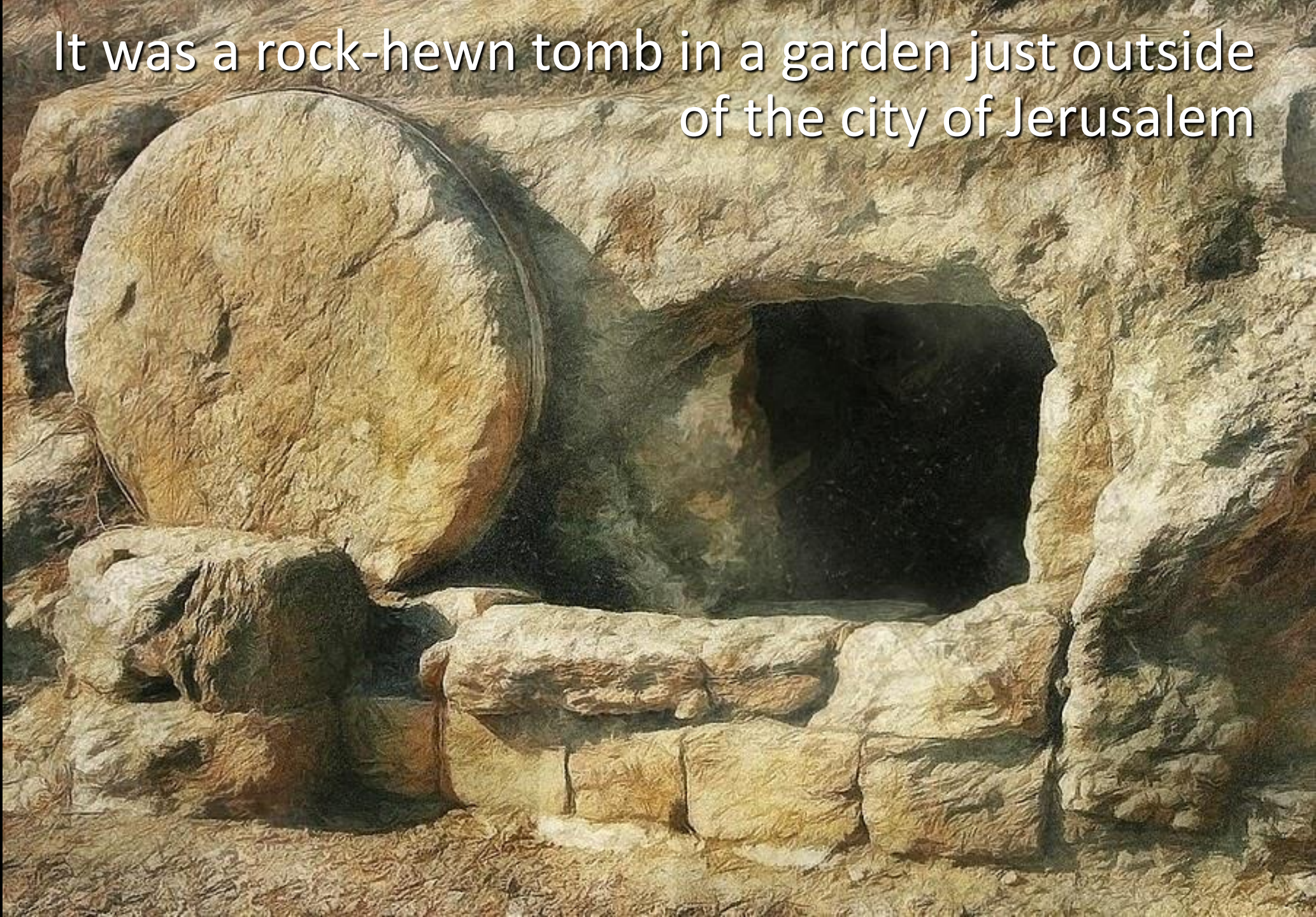
Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?

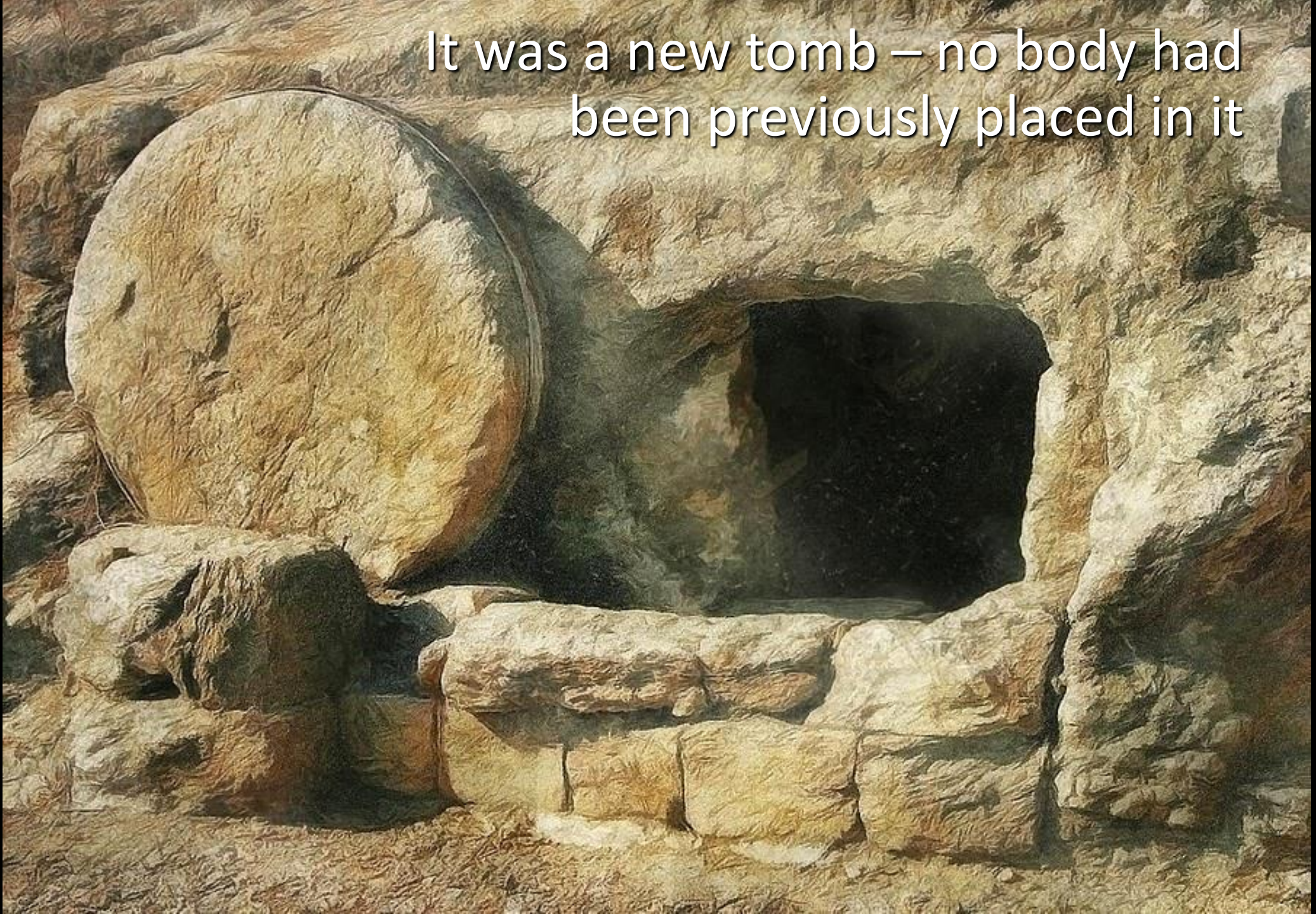


By the time we meet him in Scripture, he apparently is a resident of Jerusalem since he had a tomb for his family there (Matt. 27:57-61)

It was a rock-hewn tomb in a garden just outside of the city of Jerusalem



It was a new tomb – no body had
been previously placed in it



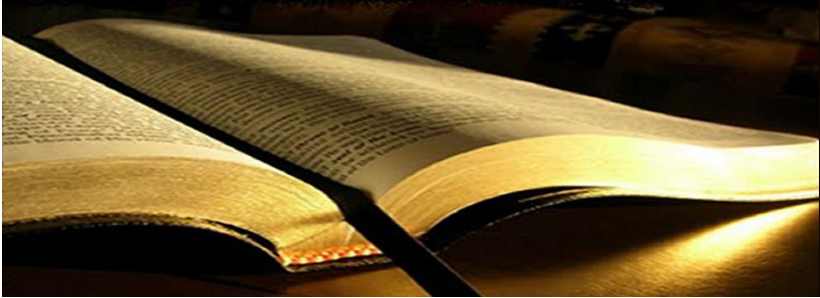
Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?



He was “a rich man” (Matt. 27:57)

- Being rich, his deeds fulfilled prophecy



Isaiah 53:9

And they made His grave with the wicked
– But with the rich at His death...

Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?



He was “a prominent council member” (Mark 15:43)

- He was a part of the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 rulers of the Jews

Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?



He was “a good and just man” (Luke 23:50)

- This certainly distinguished him from most of the Sanhedrin who were blood-thirsty murderers
- His moral goodness is seen in the fact that he did not consent when the rest of the council condemned Jesus (Luke 23:51)
- His goodness is seen in that he gave Jesus a proper burial

Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?



It is interesting to note that another Joseph was described as “just” (Matt. 1:19)

- That “just” man was the guardian of Jesus at His birth
- This “just” man was His guardian at His death

Who Was He?



He was “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly” (John 19:38)

- He feared the Jews
 - He, at Jesus’ death, was no longer a secret disciple
- There were other rulers in a similar position
 - Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night (John 3)
 - Many of the rulers who believed in Jesus



John 12:42-43

Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Joseph of Arimathea

Who Was He?



He “was waiting for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51)

- This indicates he believed that Jesus would usher in the kingdom
- Thus he looked to Jesus as the Messiah

Joseph of Arimathea



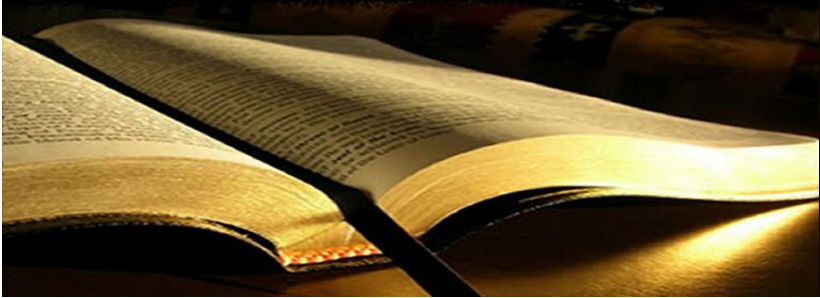
Joseph's Brief – But Important – Moment in History

Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History

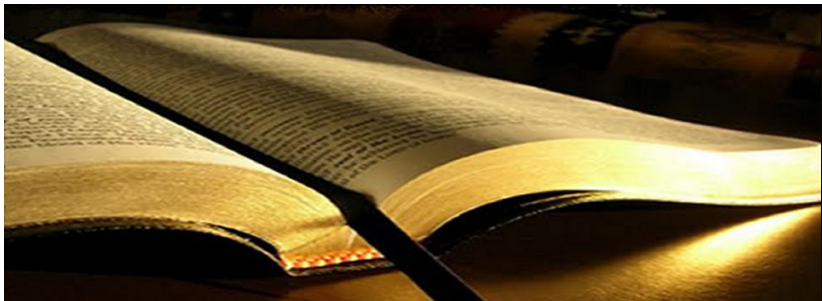


He boldly requested permission from Pilate for the body of Jesus (Mark 15:42-45)



Mark 15:42-45

Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ↓



Mark 15:42-45

44 Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. 45 And when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History



Jesus had hung on the cross from the third hour [9 A.M.] to the ninth hour [3 P.M.] (Mark 15:25, 33-34)

- He died around 3 P.M. on Friday

Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History

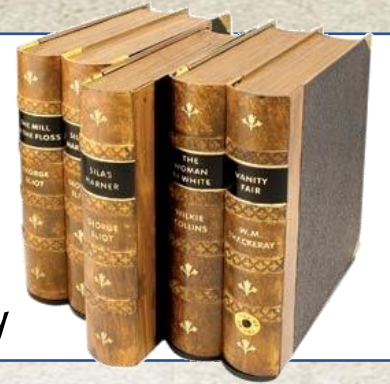


The Sabbath began at 6 P.M. [the twelfth hour]

- According to Rabbinical writings, the few hours before the Sabbath was called “the Preparation”

The Preparation Day

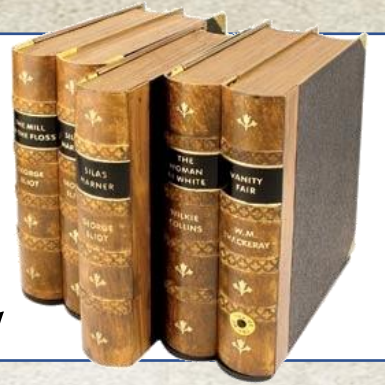
Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary



The day immediately before the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals. Preparation Day always fell on Friday among the Jewish people, because all religious festivals began on the Sabbath, or Saturday (Matt 27:62; John 19:14,31). ↓

The Preparation Day

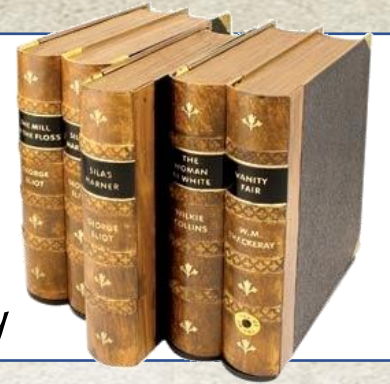
Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary



With a week of holidays ahead, the Preparation Day for the Passover was especially busy. The details for preparing the Passover supper had to be completed by afternoon. Preparations included baking the unleavened bread, gathering festive garments to wear for the occasion, and taking a ceremonial bath. ↓

The Preparation Day

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary



But above all, the paschal lamb had to be slain. Slaughtering began an hour or more earlier than for the usual daily evening sacrifice. At the Temple, the priests slaughtered thousands of lambs brought in by the people. Their blood was poured at the foot of the altar. Then the lambs were roasted whole in preparation for the Passover meal in each home that evening.

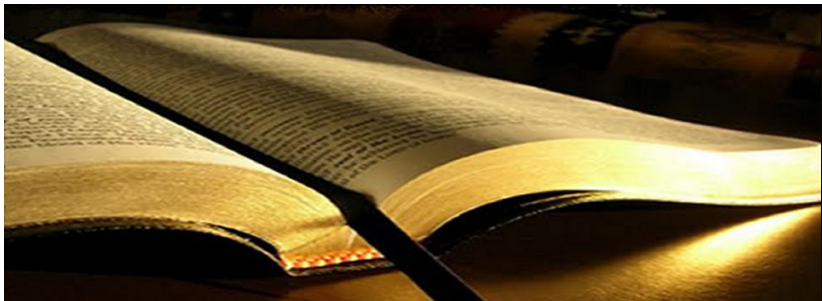
Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History



It was contrary to Jewish law to have a criminal hanging on a cross overnight (Deut. 21:22-23; Josh. 8:29)

- The Roman custom was to leave the body for the birds



Deuteronomy 21:22-23

“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.”

Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History



The Jews did not want the bodies of those crucified to remain on the Sabbath (John 19:31-37)

Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History



Joseph “takes courage” following Jesus’ death shedding his role as a secret disciple (Mark 15:43)

- He boldly goes before Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus

Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History

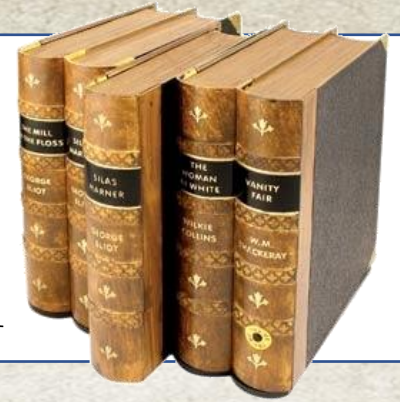


He is joined by another ruler – Nicodemus (John 19:38-42)

- He was also a believer in Jesus
 - He came to Him by night knowing that He was from God (John 3:1-5)
 - He defended Him to the Pharisees (John 7:50-53)
- He now brought spices for Jesus' burial

Joseph and Nicodemus

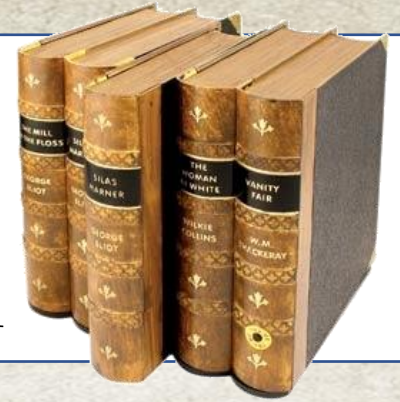
A.T. Robertson, *Minor Characters in the NT*, 11



Two members of the Sanhedrin come forward late Friday afternoon to give decent burial to the body of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea had been a secret disciple “because of fear of the Jews” (John 19:38). He was a rich man with a new tomb and he had not consented to the dreadful deed of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:51). ↓

Joseph and Nicodemus

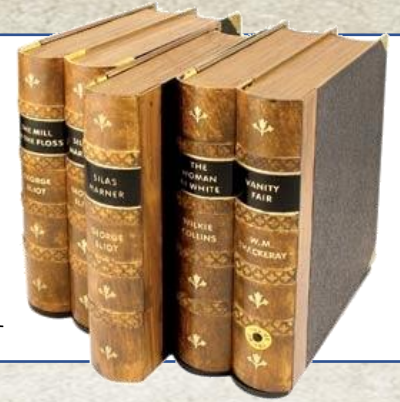
A.T. Robertson, *Minor Characters in the NT*, 11



He asked Pilate for the body of Jesus that it might not be buried in the potters' field. Then it was that Nicodemus, another secret disciple in the Sanhedrin, stepped forward and took his stand by the side of Joseph of Arimathea. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes. ↓

Joseph and Nicodemus

A.T. Robertson, *Minor Characters in the NT*, 11



These two men of scholarship and wealth now in the hour of deepest shame for Jesus openly avowed their love for Him, and confidence in Him...they...took up their cross when the apostles fled. They gave Jesus a dignified and honorable burial in Joseph's new tomb to the north of Jerusalem in the garden (John 19:41).

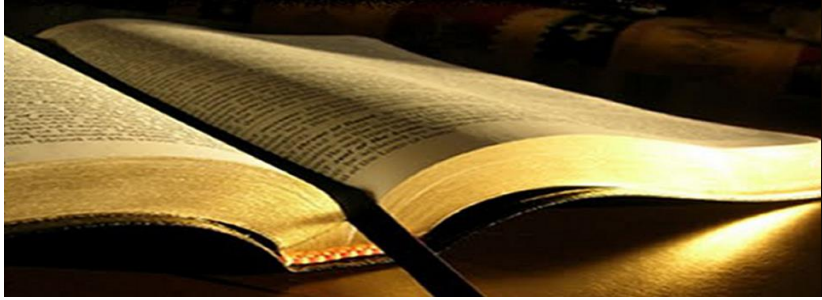
Joseph of Arimathea

His Moment in History



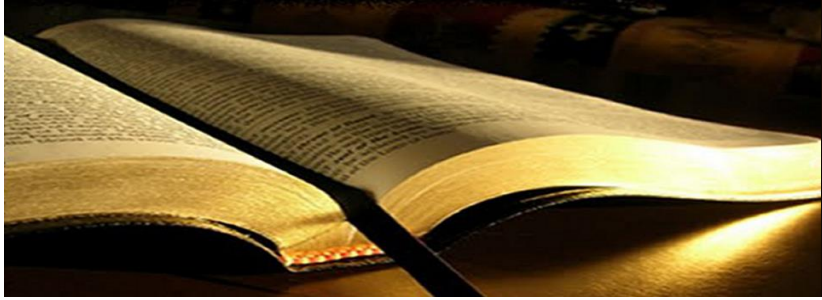
When they took Jesus' body down to bury it, they would have become defiled (Num. 19:11-13)

- There is no mention that they had servants doing the work
- They would not have been able to fully participate in Sabbath the next day
- They saw a greater need – to properly bury the body of Jesus



Numbers 19:11-13

“He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. 12 He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. ↓



Numbers 19:11-13

13 Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him.”

Joseph of Arimathea



A Lesson from Joseph

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph



The events that occurred on that day caused Joseph and Nicodemus to act (Luke 23:26-38)

- Seeing the same events, the apostles forsook Jesus and fled

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph



Joseph's attitude of heart – “waiting for the kingdom”
– caused him to be emboldened by the events he had
witnessed

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph

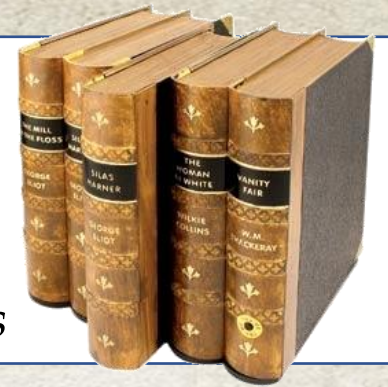


His actions were the opposite of the other disciples, especially those of Peter

- Peter spoke boldly then became afraid
- Joseph was a secret disciple who became bold

Joseph's Boldness

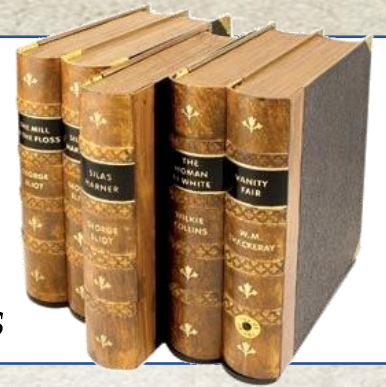
Dwight L. Moody, *Bible Characters*



I consider this was one of the sublimest, grandest acts that any man ever did. In that darkness and gloom – His disciples having all forsaken Him; Judas having sold Him for thirty pieces of silver; the...apostle Peter having denied him with a curse, swearing that he never knew Him; ↓

Joseph's Boldness

Dwight L. Moody, *Bible Characters*



the chief priests having found Him guilty of blasphemy; the council having condemned Him to death; and when there was a hiss going up to heaven over all Jerusalem – Joseph went right against the current, right against the influence of all his friends, and begged the body of Jesus.

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph



He no longer allowed fear to cause him to:

- Join in with Jesus' enemies
- Flee for his life like the other disciples

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph



The power of fear is great but the power of love is **greater**

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph



The cross has the power to overcome the pressures the world may place upon us

Joseph of Arimathea

A Lesson from Joseph



If we have a proper attitude of heart when we carefully consider what Jesus did for us, it will instill within us a spirit of boldness to honor, obey and serve the Lord no matter the consequences

Joseph of Arimathea



Conclusion

We need to take
courage from the
wonderful example
Joseph of Arimathea
has given us



By his actions he openly confessed his belief in Jesus when all others – save Nicodemus – were reluctant



We should admire the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus but we must realize we must be characterized by that same courage



Let us stand up and
be counted for the
Lord Jesus Christ

