



**The DAILY JESUS NEWS #328**  
**Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement**

**Jesus Is Buried in the Garden Tomb**

**Joseph of Arimathea Receives Possession Of Jesus' Body**  
**MK 15.42-45 (Parallel Texts: MT 27.57-58; LK 22.50-52; JN 19.38)**

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42 <sup>M</sup>It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, 43 <sup>L</sup>a man named Joseph, who came from the Judean town <sup>M</sup>of Arimathea, <sup>M</sup>a rich man <sup>MT</sup>and a prominent member of the Council, <sup>M</sup>went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

<sup>L</sup>Now Joseph was a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision. <sup>M</sup>He was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, <sup>MT</sup>for he had himself become a disciple of Jesus, <sup>J</sup>but secretly--because he feared the other Jewish leaders.

44 <sup>M</sup>Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if he had already died. 45 When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>J</sup>So with Pilate's permission he came and took the body away.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	The Praetorium, Pilate's Palace in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus is Buried in the Garden Tomb
Title:	Joseph of Arimathea Receives Possession of Jesus' Body

Isaiah had prophesied in 53.9 that God's sacrificial Lamb would be "assigned to be with wicked men, yet with a rich man in his death..." In today's reading we see how this Scripture was fulfilled perfectly in Jesus.

One of the terrors of crucifixion for a Jew was that the horror of it typically continued after death. The Romans deliberately made no provision for the burial of crucified criminals. Their bodies would be left on the cross until vultures and other carrion ate the soft tissue. When the bones fell to the ground the dogs and rodents would gnaw on them.

The best historical reason for the name "place of the skull" for Golgotha was that the skull was the hardest bone in the body, and due to its shape it would survive the longest. There were probably leftover skulls from previous crucifixions remaining at that site.

For Jews, burial and care of the dead was important because of their hope of resurrection. They believed God would transform the actual bones into new ones. The thought of dying under a curse on a tree was compounded by the subsequent destruction of even the bones, sealing off the hope of future resurrection.

Crucifixion was therefore an immediate and long-term curse in their minds. It blighted everyone in the family associated with it, and friends as well. It was the best way for the Jewish leadership to destroy Jesus and his followers permanently. So they thought.

However, there were at least two among the Sanhedrin who were secret believers in Jesus. Today's reading introduces us to the rich man that Isaiah prophesied about: Joseph of Arimathea. In tomorrow's reading Nicodemus (JN 3) re-enters the narrative as another rich man who helped Joseph bury Jesus.

Both of these men were wealthy, well-respected Pharisees who served on the Sanhedrin. John tells us that they were opposed to the hatred, vilification, and evil plot to kill Jesus, and did not give their assent to it. However, they did not make their faith in Jesus known, for fear of the backlash from those who hated Jesus. They had feared men more than God.

Matthew, Mark and Luke speak well of these two men. It is only John that tells us of their lack of courage and failure to clearly confess their faith in Jesus. His term "*secret disciple*" is not complimentary. However, the death of Jesus changed these men. This is the point. After seeing how their Lord and Master died, they could no longer hide their faith. They experienced what Isaac Watts so well described about the cross:

"When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss; and pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine--that were a present far too small,  
Love so amazing, so Divine--demands my life, my soul, my all."

Both of these men were forced out of limited, secret commitment to Jesus into public, all-encompassing devotion and loyalty to him--no matter what the consequences--because they saw the way he died.

They illustrated the attitude toward the death of Jesus that Mary had demonstrated when she lavished her own burial perfume on Jesus the night before Passion Week began (DJN #241). His death was already beginning to have its eternal impact.

Joseph therefore "*went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.*" There was no more fear of the other members of the Sanhedrin for Joseph. Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. After confirming this fact again--more official certification of the real death of Jesus--Pilate released the body of Jesus to Pilate. This indicated the respect he had for Jesus. It was the official Roman policy not to bury those they crucified.

Jesus was poor by choice. He had to borrow a denarius to use it for an illustration. He had no home to lay his head. He chose to live communally, in fellowship with all those who followed him, with no rank or class among them. It was a radical lifestyle then, and now.

However, his Father made sure that the Scripture that spoke of being "*with the rich*" in his death and burial was fulfilled, by using his death to transform the hearts of man-fearing men into the bold, God-honoring faith of the martyrs. This was yet another purpose of the cross.

#### APPLICATION:

It is not that any of us are bold or courageous in ourselves that allows us to follow Jesus in full commitment to him. Jesus himself is the only hero in our story. His death inspires us to love and commitment like nothing else. Nowhere is the example of Jesus more powerful and transforming than in his death. This is why the gospel writers concentrate their content on his death so intensely.

Consider this. Out of 365 readings that make up the entire life of Jesus in the DAILY JESUS NEWS, just 25 of them covered the roughly 8 months of his "early Judean ministry." 90 readings covered the roughly 20 months of his "Great Galilean ministry." Then, 100 readings covered the "Later Judean & Perea ministry." In contrast, 88 readings covered just 7 days of Passion Week, including 51 readings describing the final 24 hours of Jesus' life. Out of roughly 1200 days of ministry and 365 readings, in which the ratio is roughly 3 days covered by one reading, the story of Jesus' death--one day--takes 51 readings.

This means the focus on the death of Jesus by the gospel writers is 150 times more intense than the rest of Jesus' life! This is what God wants us to see about the life of his Son more than anything else.

*What does the death of Jesus need to change about your commitment level?*

*Has it already demanded your life, your soul, your all?*

*What personal sacrifice or hardship can you compare to what Jesus endured for you?*

*How do you need to express your gratitude and devotion to Jesus today, in light of how he died for you?*