

1. Why is Joseph's Story Included?

- a. Jesus was to be buried, according to the Scriptures and His allusion to Jonah and the three days in the "heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40)
- b. By including such detail about Joseph, Luke give Theophilus another credible witness to the story of Jesus
 - i. This is particularly true of his death and resurrection, for it was his tomb
 - ii. Theophilus could verify this by inquiry and investigation
 1. This shows us that Luke was not writing myth or legend
 2. He was writing historically verifiable "gospel" (herald or proclamation) that Jesus is who the church proclaimed him to be
- c. There is something praiseworthy about this man, and something that is valuable to Luke's story of the Christ and His kingdom
 - i. Luke begins this section with "behold" or "look"
 - ii. He is drawing attention to this man, Joseph, and the bold, loving faith that finally comes out of hiding when all hope seems lost

2. The Faithful Rich: There are Camels Who Make it Through the Needle's Eye

- a. Luke 18:25
 - i. Jesus, having seen the rich young ruler reject him because of the cost, declared, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- b. Councilor (of the Sanhedrin, in this case)
 - i. Mark calls him a "good-standing" member (15:43)
 - ii. John calls him a "secret disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews" (19:38)
 - iii. Matthew notes that he was wealthy, a rich man
 1. This note touches on Jesus' fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9 - "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth."
 - iv. Thus, Joseph was a powerful man in the society of Judea, wealthy, well-respected, knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and a secret follower of Jesus because of what it would cost him to acknowledge Him as True
- c. Good - *agathos* - pertaining to that which benefits, moral goodness, beneficent, causes to flourish (thus the distinction of one scarcely dying for a 'righteous' man, but for a 'good' man one might die, i.e. because he has benefitted others, Rom 5:7)
- d. Righteous - *dikaios* - that consistent with what one ought to be (with God's revealed character and Word), i.e. right - straight - in-line with Truth (often grouped together: truth and righteousness, eschatologically Ps 45:4; 85:10; Isa 11:5; Eph 4:24; 6:14; Rev 15:3; 19:11)
 - i. He had not consented to the Council's decision or action
 1. Apparently, their unjust purposes came to a head in the actions to crucify Him against all reason, and this was the straw that broke this camel's back so that Joseph was willing to take the risk as being seen as a disciple of Jesus, one who honored him in his death
 2. Decision and Action are distinguished
 - a. He did not agree with the overall decision regarding Jesus (that he was a danger? that he must be killed?)
 - b. He did not agree with their course of action, either
- e. from Arimathea (city of the Jews)
 - i. a number of towns bore this name

- ii. the point being that he was a Jewish representative on the Sanhedrin from the town of Arimathea
- f. Waiting (active) for the Kingdom of God
 - i. So, here we have a wealthy aristocrat whose eyes are upon eternity, not upon the wealth of which he stewards
 - ii. Joseph shows us that the impossibility of the “camel passing through the eye of the needle” is not absolute *when one’s eyes and heart are not upon the things of this world but upon the God who reveals Himself*
 - 1. Joseph is looking for the salvation of God’s people, their freedom from sin and its curse, their blessing as those in the presence of God, all that which the Scriptures had promised that the Messiah would bring
 - 2. Isaiah 53:11 – “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”
 - iii. This *anticipation* is the agony of faith – faith’s suffering *hope*, expecting God to fulfill His promises, and *acting* according to these promises despite the suffering of today because God is doing glorious things through it and tomorrow’s glory is far greater

3. See the Faith Which Brought This Camel Through the Needle’s Eye!

- a. See how He implored Pilate for the body of Jesus!
 - i. Why did he have to address Pilate?
 - 1. Roman crucifixion was not merely a deterrent from aberration of Roman rule and law physically, but also socially
 - a. Crucifixion was usually reserved for slaves and insurrectionists, and the only Roman citizens who receive it were those guilty of high treason
 - b. Thus, it was those of low estate, *having been stripped of their social status*, that were crucified naked, without any robes of rank
 - 2. In the light of this purpose, of social humiliation and disgrace, the Romans were not to bury the crucified.
 - a. Often they left the bodies to decompose on the crosses (Nero)
 - b. It was only with special permission from Roman authorities that the bodies of the crucified were allowed to be buried
 - 3. Unless somebody asked for the body, to bury it, the body would have simply decomposed or been eaten by scavenging animals
 - ii. What right did he have to do so?
 - 1. It may have been that Joseph’s social power, his position on the Sanhedrin even, may have given Pilate the opportunity to assuage some of his guilt
 - 2. However, the only right that it seemed he had was due to the courage it took him to ask
 - a. He is the only disciple who dared to go against the expectation, and he took great risk to do so
 - i. Mark notes the daring boldness that Joseph mustered to inquire of such a thing (15:43)
 - ii. It not only took daring in the presence of Pilate, but Joseph’s admiration of Jesus would be known to the other Council members
 - b. It appears that the crucifixion, and the way in which Jesus gave His life and surrendered to the Father, the Temple curtain torn, the earthquake, the confession of the Roman soldier, etc. moved Joseph to courageously come out of hiding as a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth
 - i. He did not want Jesus disgraced or humiliated any longer
 - ii. He *loved* Jesus and his love for him refused to allow anything to get in the way of honoring Him

1. He is the *only* disciple who acted with such brazen love
- b. See how He removed the body of Jesus from the cross!
- i. This does not mean that he did it himself, although he certainly must have been present for it, because the authority was granted to him alone by Pilate
 - ii. This would have defiled him, making him ceremonially unclean, having touched a dead body and meant that he had to “go outside the camp” (Numbers 5:1-4)
 1. This means that Joseph was willing to “go outside the camp *with him* bearing the reproach he endured” (Heb 13:11-14) “for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come”
 2. His willingness to be identified with Jesus in his criminal’s death, his humiliating death, to suffer with him “outside the camp” ostracized and rejected, is the evidence of faith and love that he had for Jesus
 3. To endure suffering, to invite it by identifying with the hated King, the rejected King, the despised King, the dead King, is what all those who follow Christ have been called to do
 - iii. To love Jesus means to endure suffering for his name and not to love your own comfort, your own honor, your own renown, your own wealth, your own rights, more than to love Him by honoring Him and His Word
- c. See how He honored the body of Jesus in his death!
- i. by wrapping it in linen cloth
 1. Joseph is spending his wealth to honor Jesus when none of the eleven are doing so
 - a. Mark tells us that Joseph had to purchase the “fine linen”
 - b. This included burial spices purchased by Nicodemus (John 19:39-40), 75 lbs worth \$\$\$
 - i. Nicodemus is the one who “came to Jesus by night” – also a secret follower of Jesus (John 3)
 - ii. They knew each other, the Pharisee and the Council member, both influential rulers, powerful, wealthy, running in the same circle with the same fears
 1. Did they have a beer together to discuss their secret?
 2. Here they gather today, dividing the cost and the labor to honor Jesus appropriately, scheming?
 2. He and Nicodemus, the secret followers of Jesus, are the ones washing his body, touching the wounds, closing the eyes, handling the lifeless body of the one who was so full of life
 - a. Think about what they were doing!
 - b. This is intimate grief and extravagant love
 - i. We remove ourselves from this process, so we cannot relate as well
 - ii. They removed the nails from his wrists and ankles. They wiped the splinters from the wounds. They washed the blood from the forehead which furrowed in anger in the synagogue, the eyes which softened at the widows’ sufferings, and the mouth which spoke the sea to still and sins to be forgiven.
 - iii. They wrapped the body, limb by limb, carefully and tenderly wiping the mixture of aloes and aromatics over it before wrapping it affectionately and circumspectly in fine linen.
 3. See their love for him!!
 - a. It was their love for him that emboldened them to bear such shame and uncleanness, such loss in the eyes of their comrades
 - b. They weren’t hiding any more – it was too much to bear – they made purchases and publicly removed the body

- ii. by laying the body in a new stone tomb
 - 1. which was new
 - a. This was uncommon and very, very personal
 - b. Joseph gave to Jesus his own family tomb – identifying Jesus as honored above his own life, his own honor, and his own name
 - 2. which was expensive
 - a. cut out of the rock – expensive and honored
 - b. high security as well to protect from grave robbers, hence the large stone
 - 3. This was a costly gift of love for the one whom Joseph considered more worthy than himself or his family or his honor
- d. See how much they got done in three hours
 - i. This all took place in a span of three hours, the Friday leading to Sabbath from 3pm (6th hour) to 6pm (sundown Friday, the beginning of Sabbath)
 - ii. It is clear that Joseph had begun working before Jesus' death, and it is clear that his thoughts and affections were set before this three-hour period so that actions were expedient and efficient
 - iii. The straw of the cross had broken this camel's heart, so that he now entered the kingdom by faith which loved Jesus more than life itself – the miracle of repentant faith in God
- e. See the women's faith, too
 - i. The women followed, saw the tomb and "how Jesus was laid" (honorably)
 - ii. They go and prepare "aromatics" and "perfumes"
 - 1. These burial spices were in addition to the preparatory spices (75lbs) that Nicodemus used to wrap Jesus' body (John 19)
 - 2. This shows us that these women wanted to honor Jesus with their own wealth, not to rest in the wealth of others, even though it was sufficient for the task
 - 3. It was probably also true that they didn't trust the two prominent men, for they were not "one of them", being secret followers of Jesus, to honor Jesus rightly
 - iii. It speaks of their love for him, too (their faith will be seen later, too)
- f. Saturday was grievously silent, for the Sabbath expectations were to rest from their works as God rested when he had completed his own.

Conclusion:

Luke begins this brief interval with the command to "see!" He wants us to behold the reality that even rich men need Jesus, just as much as the woman at the well, the thief on the cross, or the Roman centurion. He wants us to behold the faith of this man, to see what love for Jesus looks like, how honor behaves in regards to Jesus even when all hope seems lost and all suffering and grief is overwhelming. When the cost is high and your family rejects you, your social circle disdains you, your pocketbook fails you, and your love and honor of Jesus means that you suffer outside the favor of your people, fix your eyes upon Jesus. See his endurance for you, his love expressed and accomplished in limp breathless powerlessness. He gave up rightful power for my transgressions, in exchange for the ruin which my sin wrought. He, though he was rich, became poor for my sake, and humbled himself to the obedience which required death such as this. Let the cross break your back, crush your heart, and warm your affections for the Great Rescuer of your soul in this moment. Let us cease hiding from the world's shame and dishonor. Let us bear up the cost of suffering with him outside the gate. Let us break out of the closet as followers of Jesus Christ for the sake of goodness and righteousness and the glory of the God who deigned to deliver by death and finished our works so that we can truly rest in His provision: His life for our life and His death for our death... BREAD AND WINE REMEMBRANCE....