

Mark 15:42-16:20

Weighing the Evidence

“Jesus has friends of who little is known. We cannot conceive a more remarkable proof of this than the person who is here mentioned for the first time, Joseph of Arimathea. We know nothing of this man’s history. We know not how he had learned to love Christ and to desire to do Him honor. We know nothing of his subsequent history after our Lord left the world. All we know is the touching collection of facts before us. We are told that he was waiting for the kingdom of God, and that at a time when our Lord’s disciples had all forsaken Him, he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus, and buried it honorably in his own tomb. Others had honored and confessed our Lord when they saw Him working miracles, but Joseph honored Him and confessed himself a disciple when he saw Him a cold, blood-sprinkled corpse. Others had shown love to Jesus while He was speaking and living, but Joseph showed love when He was silent and dead...

No doubt the faithful are always few. But we must not hastily conclude that there is no grace in a family or in a parish because our eyes may not see it. We know in part and see only in part outside the circle in which our own lot is cast. The Lord has many ‘hidden ones’ in the church who, unless brought forward by special circumstances, will never be known until the last day. The words of God to Elijah should not be forgotten: ‘Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel (1 Kings 19:18).

- I. Joseph of Arimathea was a powerful man in the Sanhedrin who was not swayed by the opinion of man. When Jesus came on the scene of the religious life in Israel, he brought forth an approach to God and his kingdom that was unheard of in Jewish circles. He shook to the very core the religious system man set up to appease the senses. He challenged Joseph’s beliefs, world view, and convictions about what it meant to be religious. Joseph’s response was to weigh the evidence of the Scriptures and base his conclusions not on the opinion of man, but on the factual evidence of what he saw, read, and heard. He saw truth, embraced truth, and never turned back. That is the power of the veracity of the Scriptures. Truth can only be found in Jesus Christ and his Word, not in our own subjective thinking or in the subjective thinking of man.

Mark 15:42-47

John 14:16-17

John 5:31-36

Mark 1:14-15

Rev. 3:1-2

Isa. 7:9b *If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.*

- II. The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead must be accepted by faith alone. Either we believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ or we don't. In fact, the whole counsel of God's Word must be accepted as being either true or false, there is no half-belief. The powerful testimony by the women concerning Christ's resurrection came not only from the angels but from Christ himself. Their testimony met the power of unbelief head on. It was opposed by those who had been equipped with everything they needed to believe; they had no excuse. In the climate of the unbelief we live in today, Jesus' testimony is shouting loudly to the church to wake up and get serious about its testimony to a dying world. Unfortunately, that challenge only goes as deep as the heart is willing to go.

Mark 16:1-14

Luke 24:6-8

1 Cor. 15:12-20

John 20:13-16

Rev. 3:1-3 *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.*

- III. The commission Jesus gave his disciples shows the power given to those who wake up to the truth. It also shows that he who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. 121:4) can put in us a high alertness to the truth if we let him. It takes prayer, repentance, and a stubborn determination to stay awake so that we remain prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us.

Mark 16:15-20

Psalm 110:1

1 Cor. 3:15 *15But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with gentleness and respect,*