

Luke 23:50-24:12: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Date: 14 June 2020

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[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 23 verse 50 to chapter 24 verse 12. Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action, and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid.

It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared, and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead?

[1 : 0 8] He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.

And they remembered his words, And returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles.

But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves, and he went home marvelling at what had happened.

At the end of Luke chapter 23, we are introduced to Joseph of Arimathea. He's a character we've never heard of before, but he's a member of the council, which is surprising, considering the part that the council had just played in the condemnation of Jesus to his death.

However, Joseph had not consented to the council's decision. He is described as a good and righteous man who was looking for the kingdom of God. This might recall the characterisation of figures such as Simeon at the beginning of the book of Luke.

[2 : 1 5] In chapter 2, verse 25, Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Joseph requests the body of Jesus, which he takes down and wraps in linen garments and lays in the tomb. We might perhaps think about the clothes of the high priest on the day of atonement, where he wears linen garments for the ritual.

But we might also think about the very beginning of the gospel, where Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. There we also had a Joseph and a Mary. The death and resurrection of Christ is a new birth event.

There the sign given to the shepherds was that they would see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes laying in a manger. Now the sign given to new shepherds will be seeing the linen garments laid to one side and the body removed.

There is also another fulfilment of Isaiah chapter 53 here, more specifically verse 9. He makes his grave with a rich man at his death. Jesus is buried in a way that shows honour to his body, not in a common criminal's grave.

