

## Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

### The Gospel of John

Chapter 19:35-42

**"And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.' After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby."**

"And he who has seen has testified..." Here John gives us his own reasons for why he is recounting these actions of the soldiers piercing the side of Jesus. His first reason is to persuade towards belief. His second reason is to fulfill the prophecies. The two prophecies that were to be fulfilled at this point in Jesus' death were that His legs would not be broken and His side would be pierced. James Boice writes "It was the exact opposite of these two prophecies that the soldiers set out to fulfill."<sup>1</sup> Thus we can see how God controls all things, even in the small details of His Son's death.

"They shall look on Him whom they have pierced..." Obviously this has a clear reference to the physical piercing of Christ's side by the Roman soldier. But look at the actual reading of the prophecy. Zechariah 12:10,11 reads "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced..." It is the people of God who are piercing the Messiah - the house of David, the inhabitants of Israel. John tells us that it is we who have pierced the heart of Jesus. Our reaction, when we truly see the pierced Saviour, is one of mourning. This has been the

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<sup>1</sup>An Expository Commentary: The Gospel of John, vol. 5, James Montgomery Boice, pg. 1553

universal reaction every time since the first people believed in Christ. But it is a sadness that leads to joy unspeakable.

At the end of chapter 19 we are introduced to Joseph of Arimathea and reintroduced to Nicodemus. Joseph was a council member, a good and just man, waiting for the kingdom of God. He did not consent to the council's decision to murder Jesus. He was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews (Read also Luke 23:50-51).

The problem with Joseph is not that he is a good and just man, nor that he is a disciple of Christ... it is that his belief is a secret belief. Alexander MacLaren writes that there are "'secret disciples' who will only come out of their holes when the battle is over, and will then shout with the loudest."<sup>5</sup> But lest we be too hard on Joseph and Nicodemus, we are all guilty of times when we did not speak up, or times when we did not do something that we know we should have. What holds us back is the same as what held Joseph and Nicodemus back – fear.

What good indications we have regarding Joseph's faith is that he appears to be silent no longer - He asked Pilate if he could take the body of Jesus down. Bruce Milne writes "With considerable daring he goes to Pilate and requests that Jesus' body, now the property of Rome, be released to him for burial. This was contrary to practice. In the case of criminals the remains normally ended up in a special criminals' burial plot outside the city."<sup>6</sup>

Note the different effects of Jesus' crucifixion. It caused the eleven disciples who had spent three years with Jesus to scatter into hiding (except John) and it brought the two "secret" disciples out of hiding. Sometimes a danger, or trouble, caused by our union with Christ may startle the devoted and cause a temporary falling away, whereas the same situation emboldens the fearful to take a stand.

"And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night..." Now Nicodemus comes to Jesus by day. Before he came when no one would see, now he comes when people can see him. Nicodemus brings the spices for burial and Joseph provides the tomb. We are told that Jesus was "bound in strips of linen with the spices..." These 75-100 lbs of spices were interwoven into the linen strips which was the Jewish method of burial.

## TableTalk

Read Exodus 12:46. Why is it important that Jesus' bones were left unbroken?

<sup>5</sup>Expositions of Holy Scripture: St. John, vol. 3, Alexander MacLaren, pg. 288

<sup>6</sup>The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of John, Bruce, pg. 285