

Jesus -- The Post Mortem

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Following Jesus' death, a member of the Sanhedrin who would be known as Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate granted the man's request (Luke 23:50-52). Joseph was accompanied by the Pharisee and fellow Sanhedrin member Nicodemus (John 19:39). Nicodemus had met with Jesus in the past, and acknowledged Jesus' status then, saying: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him" (John 3:1-2).

Joseph of Arimathea did not support the Sanhedrin's decision to call for Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:51). The Book of John relates that Nicodemus had also once spoken on Jesus' behalf and been chastised for doing so. "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee. (John 7:50-52)."

Joseph and Nicodemus, who should have attended Jesus in life, instead attended him in death. They took down his body from the cross and "placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid (Matt 27:60)."

Suspicious that Jesus might have prearranged to have his disciples steal away his body, chief priests and Pharisees convinced Pilate to station guards at Jesus' tomb. In this way, Jesus' followers couldn't pretend that Jesus had "risen from the dead" (Matt 27:64). They warned that, if that were to happen, "the last fraud" would "be worse than the first (Matt 27:64)."

The Book of Matthew, Chapter 28 describes the next day as follows:

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulcher. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you." So, they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Hail!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me (Matt 28:1-10)."

Jesus' disciples did encounter him again in Galilee and there Jesus remained and instructed and strengthened them. After 40 days Jesus was said to have ascended into Heaven. Ten days later, the revived disciples were visited by the Holy Spirit and filled with spiritual fire.