

Secret Disciples

JOHN 19:38

Based on material prepared by Tom Thornhill

Joseph of Arimathea

- We are introduced to Joseph after the death of Jesus.
- He is mentioned in all four gospels – **Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:38-42**
- He was from Arimathea.
- He is described as a secret disciple, for fear of the Jews.

Joseph of Arimathea

- He was a person of influence, on the council.
- His wealth is seen in having a personal tomb.
- He was a just and good man, who was waiting for the kingdom of God.
- He had not consented to the condemnation and death of Jesus.

Joseph of Arimathea

- All 4 accounts record Joseph going to Pilate to request the body of Jesus – another indicator of his influence. When the body was granted, it was unusual – since Jesus died as a common criminal. But consider **Isaiah 53:9**.
- Joseph, along with Nicodemus, removed the body of Jesus and laid Him in the empty tomb and rolled a stone in front of the entrance.

Joseph of Arimathea

- Was Joseph cowardly? **John 19:38**.
- Consider **John 12:42-43**.
- Texts such as this do not speak highly of those who refuse to confess Jesus – see also **Matthew 10:32-33**.

Joseph of Arimathea

- Was Joseph cowardly? **John 19:38**
- Thus, it is likely (though not necessary) that Joseph was a weak disciple, up to a point! (Like Nicodemus – **John 3:1-2; 7:50-53**.) In both cases we find timidity in defending Jesus. BUT they did NOT consent to the Council's evil intentions.
- However, could their secrecy have been because of the corruption of the council?

Joseph of Arimathea

- **John 19:38** – Joseph, a secret disciple
- Based on our text, whatever limits of weakness they displayed – had been reached. They no longer stood with the council – and in an act that rebuffed it, they asked for the body of Jesus.
- **NOTE:** This is the only reason we know about this Joseph – an act of honor, boldness, and courage.

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- Let us make some application of this to our day and us!
- There is a time for secrecy.
- There are things we need to do in secret:
 - Giving – **Matthew 6:1-4**
 - Private prayer – **Matthew 6:5-6**
 - Not bragging – **James 3:14; 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:11**

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- Let us make some application of this to our day and us!
- **There is a time for secrecy.**
- There may come a day when true Christianity is outlawed. Will we be driven underground to worship Him under threat of persecution? Will we take risks and secretly serve Him?
- **NOTE:** This is not about cowardice, but caution – cf. **Matthew 10:16**

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **There is a time to NOT be secret.**
- The Bible condemns cowardice – **Revelation 21:8** – first on the list. **Matthew 10:28** – who should we fear?
- **Matthew 10:32-33** – if we deny Him ...

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **There is a time to NOT be secret**
- **We cannot hide our light** – **Matthew 5:14-16; Luke 11:33** – Do not put it under a basket.
- **We cannot refuse to confess Him** – **Matthew 10:32-33; Revelation 12:11.** Consider Peter – **Matthew 26:69-75** On this occasion, Peter FAILED to confess the Lord. BUT he was restored.

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **There is a time to NOT be secret**
- **When it comes to rejecting immorality and ungodly behaviors** – **1 Peter 4:3-5** – Does the world around us see that we are different?
- **When it comes to sharing the gospel** – **2 Corinthians 5:10-11** – a day of judgment is coming. **1 Peter 3:13-15** – can we (and will we) give a defense for our hope?

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **There is a time to NOT be secret**
- **When it comes to supporting our brethren – Hebrews 10:23-25** – our lesson puts this verse in context.
- **When His word is being maligned or blasphemed – Jude 3; Ephesians 5:11; 2 John 9-11** – do we stand by when error is being taught?

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **There is a time to NOT be secret**
- **When it comes to how we speak – Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8** – let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth!
- **When our faith comes with a cost – 1 Peter 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 3:12** – am I willing to suffer as a Christian?

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **There is a time to NOT be secret**
- **In all honesty** – if I were in the crowd that day Jesus was betrayed, how would I have acted?
If you lived back then, with Christianity outlawed and serving Christ came with a severe price, would you have been a secret disciple, and why?

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus?

- **Are you ashamed of the gospel?**
- That is what this lesson boils down to.
- Consider **Luke 9:26; Mark 8:38; Romans 1:16-17**
- Furthermore, if Christianity were outlawed, would there be enough evidence to convict you?
- AND if someone found out you were a Christian, would they be surprised?
2 Corinthians 13:5

Are you a secret disciple?

This lesson gives us food for thought as we consider our walk with the Lord.

Let us resolve that in the future, we will openly and wisely share our faith with others.

Are you a secret disciple?

Romans 2:16 tells us there is coming a day when God will judge the secrets of men.

What will He say about you on that day?

HOW TO OBEY THE GOSPEL

Hear the word of God (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15; James 1:21)

Believe the gospel message (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24)

Repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31)

Confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32-33)

Be Baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4)

Remain Obedient (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 2:10; Hebrews 3:12)