

Joseph of Arimathea appears in all four gospels. The exact location of Arimathea is uncertain but it was likely in Judea. We know that Joseph was a good and righteous man, a member of the council who had dissented from their decision to send Jesus to his death, and a secret disciple who looked for the kingdom of God.

We also know that Joseph was a wealthy man. Even if we were not told so in the gospel of Matthew, we could surmise it from the fact that he had a new tomb available in which to lay Jesus.

A tomb in Jesus' time was a chamber cut into solid rock with many shelves along its walls. A newly deceased person would be wrapped in a shroud and laid on one of the shelves. A stone barrier at the entrance kept out animals. After a year or so, the family would enter the tomb again, collect the bones, wash them with wine, and place them in a stone box called an ossuary. A single ossuary, marked with the family name, might hold the bones of many family members.

So a tomb could be used by a family for many generations, even centuries. Joseph may have been a newcomer to Jerusalem. Custom prohibited purchasing a tomb from a family whose ancestors occupied it. So

Joseph probably paid a substantial sum to have laborers excavate a new tomb for use by him and his family.

The burial of Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9: *And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.* This does not necessarily call the rich wicked, just mentions both.

Why else might the Lord have been given a new, empty tomb? Well, no one would be able to claim that the bones of some holy man had caused His resurrection, as happens to the man thrown into Elisha's tomb in 2 Kings 13:21. Also, we never read of the Lord actually being in the presence of a dead person. The only ones he encounters are immediately restored to life. *He is life.* John 14:6: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* Would the ossuaries have opened and their occupants come forth like Lazarus? There is no way to know.

When the soldiers stripped Jesus of His clothes, they took the only possessions He had in life. But then in death Joseph honored Him with a costly tomb and a small fortune in myrrh and aloes. Commendable but in the end meaningless. *He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption* (Acts 2:31). We honor and worship a *living* Lord.

Questions:

1. What does "Golgotha" mean?
2. Why do they offer the Lord a mixture of wine and myrrh to drink in verse 23? Why does the Lord refuse it?
3. What Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in the last part of verse 24?
4. What time of day was the "third hour"?
5. What is the accusation against the Lord in verse 26?

6. Verses 29-32 give us the insulting mocking words and attitudes that were directed at the Lord. What verse or verses from the Old Testament speak of these things?
7. Why is there darkness over the whole land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour?
8. What Old Testament scripture is quoted in verse 34?
9. What do verses 35 and 36 mean?
10. What does verse 37 tell us about Jesus' death?
11. What is the veil of the temple in verse 38 and why is it torn in two?
12. In verse 39, what do you think the centurion has noticed about the Lord to make him to say "Truly this man was the Son of God"?
13. What other verse or verses in this gospel mention the women in verses 40 and 41?
14. Why does Pilate marvel that Jesus is already dead?