

A ROYAL FUNERAL NO. 2390

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”
John 19:38-42

LET us go to this grave, but not to weep there, nay, not to shed so much as a single tear. The stone is rolled away, our Lord's precious body is not there, for Christ has risen from the dead. It may be that, like Mary at the sepulcher, we shall see a vision of angels, but if not, we may behold a company of comforting truths which still linger about the empty tomb of our ascended Lord.

We are expressly told, in Holy Scripture, that our Lord was buried. It was evidently not sufficient for us merely to be told that He died, we must also know that He was buried. Why was this? Was it not, first, that we might have a certificate of His death? We do not bury living men, and the Lord Jesus would not have been buried if the centurion had not certified that He was certainly dead. The Roman officer had probably seen Christ's heart pierced by the soldier's spear, when blood and water flowed forth from His side. At any rate, when his men went to execute the *coup de grace*, which finished the lives of the other two, by the breaking of their legs, they were so certain that He who hung in the middle was really dead that they broke not His legs.

Christ's being given up for burial, was Pilate's certificate that He had not merely pretended to die, but that it was a real death, and that His body had no life remaining in it. This is an essential point, for if Jesus did not die, He has made no atonement for sin. If He died not, then He rose not, and if He rose not, then your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. The sepulcher, therefore, occupies a very important place in the story of the death of Jesus.

Again, was He not buried to fulfill a type which He had Himself chosen? Like as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, in the heart of the sea, even so was the Son of man to lie for that time in the bowels of the earth. The casting of the runaway prophet into the sea quieted the angry waves, the tempest fell asleep when he was given up as a victim, and Christ's being cast into the sea of death has quieted the storm of almighty wrath, we sail today as on a sea of glass, because Christ was buried in those awful billows. He must fulfill the type of Jonah, or else He spoke not aright concerning Himself when He said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.”

Further, was not our Lord buried to make His battle with death and His triumph over it more complete? He has conquered death, but He has also burst open the castle of death, that is the grave. He has bearded the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall. In this matchless duel, He has set Himself to

fight, not only with death, but with death and the grave combined, and hence the paean of victory is not merely, “O death, where is thy sting?” but it is also, “O grave, where is thy victory?” Christ’s victory is altogether complete. He has led captivity captive, because He became a captive. He has vanquished all death’s allies, as well as death itself, by going down into the grave, and rending its bars asunder.

Beside all this, did not our Lord die, and condescend to be buried, to sweeten the grave for His people? Rightly did we sing just now concerning the tomb—

*“There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.”*

Unless the Lord should speedily come, as He may—God grant that He may!—we shall fall asleep, and these bodies of ours will be committed to the silence of the grave. We must not dare to dread the sepulcher, where Christ has been, we may safely and honorably go. As I told you, the other day, He left the fine linen to be the furniture of our last bed, He left the napkin rolled up by itself, that weeping friends might dry their tears thereon, He left, besides, the myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds’ weight, which Nicodemus brought. I never heard that they were taken away from the tomb, Jesus left them there, and they still shed their sweet fragrance throughout the graves of all His saints. We are not going to a noisome vault, but to a perfumed chamber, hung with the fine linen sheets that encompassed the Christ, and odorous with the spices that shed their sweetness upon Him. To die, is now our gain, to sleep in Jesus, is to be blest indeed.

I may add, also, that I think our Lord was buried so that, from His tomb, He might leap to His throne. He goes to the lowest depths that thence He may rise to the loftiest heights. You, too, believer, may go as low as the grave, but you can never go any lower, and when you are at your lowest, you are then on your way to your highest. Your Lord stooped to conquer, so must you. You will have won the victory over death when you lie, stark and cold, upon your last bed. The adversary may think that he has defeated you—

*“When silent is your pleading tongue
And blind that piercing eye,”*

and inactive that once diligent hand, but it is not so, you shall then have broken loose from everything that hinders you from entering upon your highest service for your Lord, and you shall have entered that holy place where you shall see His face, and serve Him day and night in His glorious temple.

I like to think of Jesus as going down into the lowest parts of the earth, when I remember that He that descended is the same who also ascended. This should encourage us to feel that, sink as we may, lower and yet lower still, we shall rise all the higher because of that sinking, and shall enter still more completely into fellowship with Christ both in His sufferings and in His glory. It was needful, then, my brother, that there should be a new tomb in the garden close by Golgotha, and that our Lord should lie there.

It is a very wonderful thing that He, whose face is the light of heaven, whose hands are sceptered with the government of the universe, and whose very feet are sandaled with the stars, should yet bear the image of death upon His pale countenance, and should lie there lifeless, to be handled by others, and to be wrapped as any other dead man might be, in fine linen and sweet spices.

But my subject at this time is concerning the wonderful working of God with regard to the burial of Jesus. The providence of God began with the body of Christ from the very first, even from His conception, and it followed Him right to the last, even to His burial. You see the holy Child in the manger, and you notice how all things round about minister strangely to Him. Throughout His life, all things worked together for His good, not to screen Him from suffering, but to cause Him to suffer, and to make Him triumphant through those sufferings. And when He came to die, I see the finger of God displayed at every part of that dread tragedy, but now that He is dead, will that kind providence forsake Him? Ah, no!

I want to stop here, and say to you who anxiously ask, “What will become of me when I die? I am so very poor and needy”—never think about that matter, you have enough to do to trust God till you die. As to what is to become of your body when you are dead, never fret about that. It is wonderful how God takes care of the very dust and ashes of His chosen, how, sometimes, they receive in death respect and honor which they never thought would have come to them, and after they have passed away, their children and their household are blessed of God for their sake.

The God of the living forsakes not His saints in dying, or after death. As Ruth would cleave to Naomi, and said, “Where thou die, I will die, and there will I be buried,” so, with greater faithfulness, does God cleave to His people, He will see them buried, and take care of their children after they are gone. This is His comforting promise, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.”

Now let me remind you how God took care of the Firstborn among many brethren. Jesus is dead, and in the hands of wicked men, the executioners have Him in their charge, those same executioners, who just now broke the legs of the two thieves, have hold of Christ, but that precious body must be preserved, not a bone of Him must be broken, no disrespect must be paid to that immaculate Being. Death and hell would have reveled in insulting Christ’s body if they could.

As Achilles dragged Hector by the heels round the walls of Troy, so would Satan have liked that men should have mauled the dead body of Christ. He would have cast Him to the dogs or to the kites if he could have had his way, but so it must not be. Many a man who has been a prince has been buried with the burial of an ass, but this great Savior, whom men despised, must have a royal funeral, how is He to have it? That is the point I wish to bring to your notice now, and before I have finished my discourse, I hope I shall be able to prove to you that everything required for Christ’s burial was supplied.

I. The first requisite was, SOMEONE TO OBTAIN THE BODY.

The law has executed Jesus, though wrongfully, and His body therefore belongs to the executioner, or at any rate, to the law. Who is to rescue that precious body from the clutches of the law? Ah! you may look your eyes out, but you cannot see the man who can accomplish this task, yet God knows where He is. There is one Joseph, who has an estate at Arimathea, a wealthy man, a member of the Sanhedrim, “an honorable counselor.” He appears upon the scene, and he is the right man to do what is required, for he is *a secret disciple*. He has great respect for that dead body, for he had great regard for Jesus while He was alive.

As we look Joseph up and down, we say, “Yes, if he will do his best, he is the very man for this emergency.” He is under great arrears of obligation to his Lord, whom he scarcely owned in His lifetime, yet he is a real disciple. Joseph, if you can do anything in this matter, we give you this solemn charge, go and get the body of Christ.

He was, besides, *an official, and influential*, therefore he could gain an entrance where a private person could not, and what was still more to the point with such a man as Pilate, he was *a rich man*, for in those days, in the courts, everything went by favor. The poor man’s cause might be just, yet he could not secure a hearing, but the gold in a rich man’s hand would speak more loudly than the most convincing arguments upon a poor man’s tongue. So this secret disciple is the one to beg the body of Jesus, because he is an honorable counselor, and also because he is rich. If he is willing to undertake the task, he is the man to accomplish it.

But my heart misgives me, for Joseph has been secretly a disciple, and therefore I conclude that he must be *very timid*. During the last two years or so, he has been really a follower of Christ, and yet he has kept in the council. He has been a member of the Sanhedrim, yet he has not spoken out against its evil deeds. Ah, me! I am afraid that he will not be able to go and speak to Pilate. But note, brethren, what Mark tells us about him, “Joseph of Arimathea went in *boldly* unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.” God can make a coward bold as a lion in the day when He needs him, and this good man, full of honor, and abounding in wealth, said, “I will go to Pilate.” Why! this cruel vacillating governor will put a man to death if he aggravates him, who knows how this interview may end? But Joseph says, “I will

go to Pilate.” He obtains admittance, and he asks for the body of Jesus. Pilate exclaims, “Why, He is not dead yet!” “Yes, He is,” answers Joseph, “I have seen Him die.” When the centurion comes, he certifies that He is dead. Pilate cannot imagine what Joseph can want with a dead man’s bones, but he says, “You may have His body. Take Him down, you may have Him.” So Joseph comes back to the cross, he has proved that he was the very man for this work. We should never have thought of him, but God had him in reserve for the hour of need, and brought him to the front at the right moment.

Now you see Joseph hurrying away from Pilate’s hall to the hill of Calvary, where the crosses are still standing. He has, in his hand, the order signed by the governor, he shows it to the officer in charge, and he is a man of such prominence, so well known as an honorable counselor, an official gentleman, and a person of wealth, that everybody is ready to help him. He himself is probably first and foremost in raising the ladder, helping to pull out the great nails, and to let down the blessed body. He is the man for this work, for *he is objectionable to nobody*.

He has been a counselor, so that those on the side of the Sanhedrim do not object to him. The holy women stand watching him, but they have no fears as to his action, they know him, for he has probably done them many a kindness privately in days gone by, and they know that he has been a secret disciple of the Lord. He has brought with him fine white linen, which he was well able to buy, he reverently takes the body of Jesus down from the cross, and tenderly wraps it round with the costly winding-sheets which he has purchased, and so this trying business is finished without interference from anyone.

I hope that these details do not seem trivial to you, for nothing is trivial that concerns our Lord and His cause. In the tabernacle and the temple, even the nails had to be duly prepared, and I think that, in this matter of providing a suitable person to go and get the body of Jesus out of the hand of the legal custodian, we ought to admire the wonderful goodness of God.

Depend upon it, if, at any other time, there should be some great and terrible task to be accomplished, God will find the man to do it. If one shall be wanted, by and by, at peril of his life to bear witness for Christ, the right person will be found, and until this chapter of divine providence shall come to an end in our Lord’s eternal glory, there shall never be a crisis, however crucial, but the man shall be found whom God wants, or the woman who is to occupy the place which the Lord has for her to fill.

Thus, Joseph has obtained the body of Jesus from the hands of Pilate, and he may do what he will with it, that is the first point.

II. The next requisite is, SOMEONE TO BURY THE BODY.

We do not want one man to carry away that body, and lay it in the grave, for such a person as Jesus should have an honorable funeral. Now see what happens. There is another man, also a counselor, “a ruler of the Jews,” “a master of Israel,” yet another secret disciple who had come to Jesus by night, he appears just at this very moment, “There came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night.” Now we have two mourners for our Master’s funeral. James and John—where are you? They cannot hear my question. Peter and Bartholomew, where are you? They are too far away, they cannot hear me.

Who will follow the body of Jesus to the grave? Who will be chief mourner? There are some gracious women, brave enough to stand afar off, and willing enough, if beckoned, to come and join the sad *cortege* that attends the corpse to the tomb. But how honorable to Christ was it that the first two and the chief mourners on that sorrowful occasion should be two members of the Sanhedrim, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two men of note, two reputable individuals who were held in honor even among the Jews who crucified Christ!

First, let me say of these two men who attended the burial of our Lord, that *they did Him honor*. Thus was fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” All the while until Christ had paid the dreadful price of our redemption, He was despised and rejected of men, but as soon as ever He could say, “It is finished,” and the debt was fully paid, He must not be despised and rejected any

more. Now, rich men must come and do Him homage, and accordingly Joseph and Nicodemus came. It may seem only a little thing, but it indicates the turn of the tide, just as the floating of a straw may do. Jesus is no longer derided, nor even attended alone by the poorest and most obscure of Galileans, but Joseph from Arimathea, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, attend the funeral of the great Lord and Savior of men, and so pay such honor as they can to His dead body.

While they thus did Him honor, *they received from Him much more honor*. Ah, my brethren, it was a great privilege that was accorded to these two men! I stand and wonder how it was that this position was allotted to two who had kept so long behind the scenes. They had lost—they had lost—I cannot tell you how much they had lost, two, perhaps three years of constant fellowship with Christ, and of instruction from His own dear lips, they had lost incalculably.

They were in the rear of all Christ's disciples, Mary Magdalene was in front of them, the woman that was a sinner was far ahead of them, they were right in the rear rank, yet their Master, in the splendor of His grace, gives them this privilege even while He Himself lies dead, to them is accorded the high honor of handling His blessed flesh, and laying Him in the tomb.

I am afraid that some of you secret Christians, who never come out boldly for Christ, will not have such an honor as this. If the Lord ever uses you at all, it will be in some sad business, such as a funeral, and even that will be an honor to you, if you are permitted to attend Him in His death though you have not shared the glory of His life. You lose—oh! you lose incalculable boons by not avowing your discipleship. Yet I pray that there may come a time, and that it may come at once, when even you will come out, and do what you can for your Lord, saying to yourself, "Now is the hour when even I, timid as I am, must avow Him."

When soul murder is in your streets, when heresy is in your pulpits, when apostasy is in your churches, you are recreant to the last grain of your spiritual manhood if you who love Christ do not come out boldly on His side, and declare that you belong to Him. If you never have confessed Him before men, and you neglect this opportunity, wherein there is the greatest and most urgent of need, I fear that you will never own Him at all.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both wanted for this sad task, and though we should never have thought of inviting them to perform it, yet they were the only two men connected with Christ who were exactly fitted for the office, and as I have said, they thus honored Christ, and He thus honored them. I should also say, brethren, that among all the disciples, there were *no more sincere mourners for Christ than these two men*.

I think that I hear Joseph fetch a deep sigh, and say, "Ah! Nicodemus, how wicked I have been, for I have not kept with Christ as I ought to have done! I ought to have gone with Him to prison and to death, instead of that, I have been among the ungodly, rich and honored." "Ah!" says Nicodemus, "and I went to Him by night, and He talked so sweetly to me, but I have been hiding away ever since. I feel ashamed to touch this blessed bleeding hand, I realize that it is a high honor to be allowed to handle these dear feet, and to wrap the linen all about them, but I do not deserve such an honor, I am sure;" and they would stop, and weep, and sigh again, to think of how they had ill-treated their Lord, by what they may have thought was modesty, but which conscience now tells them was nothing else than shameful cowardice.

And I do not think that, out of all Christ's followers, there were any who would be *more tender with that blessed body*, for they were gentlemen. They were not countrymen or fishermen, used to handling and being handled roughly, they were of tenderer mold, and when they looked on that dear form, how gently would they treat it! Being also men of property, they would have many servants able to help them in all sorts of ways. In His wonderful interment, our Lord Jesus could not have been better attended, nor have been buried by men who would have performed the mournful duty with more solemn feelings, more hushed reverence. They loved Him, yet felt that they had acted in an unloving manner towards Him, and now also felt that the best they could possibly do was all too little for the blessed One who had sealed the forgiveness of their cowardice by permitting Himself to be entrusted to their hands.

I can see great love about this dead Christ, and great pity, and great kindness, that even His lifeless body should be giving life to the faith and hope of Joseph and Nicodemus, and should be firing them with fresh ardor. While they looked upon His corpse, they must have been compelled to resolve that never more would they be ashamed of Him whom they had helped to lay in the grave.

So far we have, in imagination, brought our Lord Jesus Christ into the hands of two most suitable persons to bury Him.

III. The next requisite is, THE MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR THE BURIAL.

The manner of the Jews is to bury the body wrapped in fine white linen, where is that? I do not believe that Peter has a yard of it anywhere. I hardly think that James and John have anything much finer than fishermen's coats, and so forth. *Fine linen*—let it be the best that can be bought, let it be white as snow, for wrapping around this perfect body, but where is it to be obtained? Joseph has it, he is a man of wealth, who can get anything that is wanted, and he has brought with him the best winding sheets in which to wrap the Savior's body.

But we must also have *mixed spices in abundance*, fifty pounds' weight at the least. "Oh!" says Nicodemus, "I have brought one hundred pounds' weight with me, and if I could have found a conveyance, and more spices had not been superfluous, I would have brought many hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes, well mingled according to the art of apothecary, with which to surround that blessed form."

See, my brothers, Christ wanted for nothing when He was dead, do you think that He will want for anything while He is alive? "Ah! but our little church, our poor cause, is wanting money badly, and we are going to get up a bazaar." What! and you have not thought about going to your Lord for what you lack? The fact is, the church of God has been looking to the devil to find funds for the Lord's work, instead of seeking aid from the Lord Himself. It is a pity that we cannot come back to Him who, even when He was dead, had a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes brought to Him. Cannot we trust Him for all that is required for His service?

It will be a better and a brighter day for the church when she believes that, if Christ wants myrrh and aloes, He can get them. Does not the Lord say, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine...Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof"? Let us go forth to fight the Lord's battles without any doubts concerning the commissariat of His army. He can provide, and He will provide, only let us trust Him, and not go down to Egypt for help, or lean upon an arm of flesh.

As Nicodemus gave so freely to the dead Christ, how generously ought you and I to give to our living Lord! If we have anything in the world, let us give it all up to Christ. Even if we have nothing left but a grave, which we have provided for our own funeral, yet let us surrender that, as Joseph did when he gave up his new tomb that his Lord and Master might lie therein.

Thus, you see, that all that is needed for Christ's burial is there already. So I leave that part of our subject, and go on to the next.

IV. Another requisite is, A PLACE WHEREIN TO BURY THE BODY.

We have the body, Pilate has given us that, we have the spices and the fine linen, and we have the two men ready to bury the body, now we want a tomb.

It would be very convenient, and also very important, if we could get *a sepulcher near at hand*, because, you see, if the body of Christ had to be carried a long way to be buried, the Jews would say, "Ah! they changed it on the road, they took it a mile or two out of the city, and the Christ who rose from the dead is not the Christ that was buried." But here, just at the bottom of this rocky scarp which is called Golgotha, there is a garden, and in that garden there is a tomb. Mark the providence of God in this matter, for that tomb belongs to Joseph, and there the Savior's body is lovingly laid. He did not, and He could not, lack a tomb when it was required, when the time came for Him to be buried, the sepulcher was there already prepared, hewn out of the rock.

It would be also a great advantage if it could be *a new tomb*, wherein never was anybody buried, for if they buried Him in an old tomb, the Jews would say that He had touched the bones of some prophet or other holy man, and so came to life. Ah! well, Joseph's is a new tomb, there are no bones there, for nobody has ever been buried there before.

It would seem, too, to be the proper thing for our Lord to have *a tomb in a rock*. You cannot fitly put Him in sand who is Himself the Rock of Ages. No, let our Lord Jesus, with that grand immutable love and eternal faithfulness of His, let Him lie in the solid rock. There it is, all ready for Him, just the very kind of tomb that is wanted for Him who is the Rock of our salvation.

If it should also be *a tomb in a garden*, there would be a touch of familiar beauty about that arrangement. One likes that the very surroundings of Christ's grave should be instructive. I cannot stop to tell you about all the beauty and the instruction which cluster around a garden, the gardens of Scripture especially are most fruitful subjects, and our Lord's garden-tomb might suggest to us a most profitable theme for meditation.

Thus, Christ's tomb is the very thing we would wish for Him. In no secondhand grave, in no town fosse, in no pauper's grave dug out of the earth, but in a rich man's sepulcher, worthy of a king, it is there that the Christ must lie. See how God provides for His Son, and learn how He will provide for you. If He provides for His Son when dead, He will provide for you while living, therefore be you comforted whatever your condition may be.

V. There is one more difficulty, and perhaps it is the worst of all, for it concerns THE TIME FOR THE BURIAL.

You see, it is very late in the afternoon, and besides, it is the "preparation" for a very important Sabbath, and these good people cannot do any work on the Sabbath, their consciences will not permit them to do so, for they are strict Jews. But it so happened that they obtained the body just in time to wrap it round about with the spices and with the linen, and then we are told, "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for *the sepulcher was nigh at hand*." To me, it is a very pretty thought that, when there was so little time, the place of burial was so near. It would have taken all the lingering twilight to have carried Jesus far, but the right place was near. Providence knew all about the difficulty, and provided for it.

Next, they could not take much time with the body, and *the ceremony was the more fitting for Christ's rising*. Beloved, whenever you cannot do anything for your Lord as you would like to do it, do the best you can, and you may depend upon it that you have done just what ought to be done. "Oh, no!" they say, "Oh, no! we would have liked to have wrapped Him up much more leisurely, and more delicately, we would have made a finished work of embalming that precious body." Listen, nothing more was wanted. Jesus was not going to be in the sepulcher long. God's Holy One could not see corruption. He did not need to be embalmed, for He was to be up again so soon, and therefore a hurried burial was quite sufficient.

Listen again, there is another thing worth mentioning. *The incompleteness brought them early to the sepulcher*. If they do not finish their task of love on the evening of the crucifixion, they will be there early in the morning, when the Sabbath is over, to complete it. That was precisely what was wanted, that, as soon as the Master was risen, on that first day of the week, they should be there to see Him, but they would not have been there to see Him, perhaps, if they had not come, as the holy women did, with more spices to finish the work which had been, comparatively speaking, so roughly and hurriedly done on that dread evening.

It was all right, and I drew much comfort and joy out of this fact when I was thinking it over. I said to myself, "Sometimes, I am so oppressed with the care of the many things entrusted to me that I cannot study my sermon as I would like." Perhaps it is all the better for that, the Master does not want studied sermons. It may be also that it suits the hearer all the better. If you cannot bury Christ as you would like to because there is not time, when you have done the best that you could, and sorrowed over it, you have done the very thing that your Lord wants you to do. Rest you content with that, and just say to yourself,

“He takes the will for the deed, and all my blundering and mistakes He overlooks because I did it all out of love for His dear name.”

I have talked thus to you about Christ’s dead body. Oh, that I had an opportunity of speaking to you about Him as the living Lord! But as I cannot, for our time is gone, I would ask you to just stoop down, and in faith and love to kiss those wounds, admire that pierced hand, that other hand, that nailed foot, that other foot, that side with the spear gash, that dear face with closed eyes, and then say, “He bore all this for me, what have I done for Him? “God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

Mark 15:34-47, John 19:38-42, 1 Corinthians 15:1-9

Concerning the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall read in three portions of the New Testament. First, in the Gospel according to Mark, the fifteenth chapter, beginning at the thirty-fourth verse.

Mark 15. Verse 34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

It is, “My El, my strong God, my mighty One, why hast thou forsaken me?”—the bitterest words that were ever uttered by mortal lips, and expressing the quintessence of agony. Alas! that my Savior should ever have had to say as much as this when He hung upon the cross, suffering and dying for me.

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

Did they misunderstand His bitter cry of woe? Could they mistake what He meant? Was it not, on the part of these people that stood by, a willful wicked witticism upon what our Lord Jesus had said? We fear that it was so.

36-37. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.*

His last words were, “It is finished.”

*“It is finish’d!”—Oh what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord:
‘It is finish’d!’
Saints, the dying words record.”*

38-39. *And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him,—*

The officer who had charge of the arrangements for the execution, “when the centurion, which stood over against him,”—

39. *Saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Probably, saying a great deal more than he understood. There was something so extraordinary about this central Sufferer that the centurion could not understand who He could be unless He was truly “the Son of God.”

40-41. *There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.*

Where was Peter? We know that John was near the cross, but James and the rest of the apostles were apparently hiding away, yet the holy women were there.

42-43. *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.*

I have no doubt that Pilate was very surprised that a member of the Sanhedrim should come and ask for the body of Jesus, when, a little while before, he had put Him to death really by the mandate of that body of men.

44-45. *And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.*

This very centurion, who had declared that Jesus was the Son of God, now came forward to bear witness that he had seen him die; and then Pilate told Joseph that he might go and take the body.

46. *And he bought fine linen,—*

This was probably the first time that fine linen had touched the flesh of the Son of man; He had been accustomed to much coarser stuff in His lifetime, but now Joseph “bought fine linen.”

46-47. *And took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.*

That is Mark’s account of our Lord’s death and burial, very terse, and very suggestive. Let us now read John’s description of the sad scene.

John 19. Verses 38-40. *And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus,—*

Oh, how tenderly, and with how many tears, did they take their Lord’s body from the cross!

40-42. *And wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

John’s Gospel contains some particulars not mentioned by Mark, and the same may be said of Matthew’s account, and Luke’s. Read them all when you are home, and ponder the wonderful story.

The apostle Paul, speaking of our Lord’s resurrection, mentions His burial. We will now read in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, just a few verses from the fifteenth chapter.

1 Corinthians 15. Verse 1. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel—*

Mark that Paul writes concerning “the gospel.” We shall see now what “the gospel” is.

1-3. *Which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;*

That is the central truth of the Gospel.

4. *And that he was buried,—*

That is an essential part of the Gospel.

4. *And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

This is the bright light of the Gospel, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead—

5-9. *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Yet he made one amongst the many testifiers to the fact that Jesus really died, and was buried, and rose from the dead, of which we will speak more particularly by and by.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—306, 832

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