

over night, and the "day of preparation" for the Sabbath ended at six o'clock in the evening, after which no work must be done. It was on this account, and also because the coming Sabbath was regarded as a high day in connection with the feast—a day of peculiar sanctity—that the chief priests requested Pilate to hasten the death of the victims, that their bodies might be removed. We have here an illustration of the fact that ungodly men often work out, unconsciously, the purposes of God. The action of the priests secured two things: 1. The fulfilment of an important typical prophecy concerning Christ, and, 2. An indubitable proof that he was really dead. The Roman soldiers, on receiving Pilate's order, at once broke the legs of the two malefactors, but touched not the sacred limbs of Jesus; and thus the word was fulfilled, "A bone of him shall not be broken." In order, however, to dispel any lingering uncertainty as to his death, one of the soldiers with a spear pierced the Saviour's side, inflicting a wound that, apart from the sufferings of crucifixion, was sufficient to cause instant death.

Yes, Jesus is dead; but who will give him burial? The foes have vanished from Golgotha: who among the friends and confessors will now appear? Among the thousands who throng the streets of Jerusalem, is there one who will approach Calvary with a friendly purpose? Doubtless, had the Jews been left to take their own course, Jesus would never have found a resting place in the tomb of Joseph. As they had doomed him to a felon's death, so they would have given him a felon's burial, at the grim "place of a scull." But God, who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, had otherwise decreed. Centuries before, the voice of prophecy had declared that he should rest "with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;" and God never lacks instruments to carry out his designs. But whence will come the loving hearts and gentle hands to bear him to his rest? Will not Peter come?—he who said but a little while ago, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I?" Alas! Peter is weeping in solitary anguish over his own sad fall, and thinks not of a work like this. Will not John come?—he who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Supper; who was with him on the mount when he was transfigured, as well as in Gethsemane when he prayed? Overwhelmed with sorrow—utterly disheartened by the sudden and terrible overthrow of hopes that had been so bright—John thinks not of this last tribute of love to the Master. Will not some of those whom Jesus healed of bodily and spiritual maladies, come? So we might expect; but alas, fear is stronger than gratitude, and not one of these rescued ones dares avow his love for the crucified Nazarene. Whence, then, will come the faithful ones to give Jesus burial? Not from among the disciples who had followed him for years; not from among the blind whom he had restored to sight, or the sick whom he had healed, or the lepers who had been cleansed by his word; but, wonderful to relate, from among the members of the Sanhedrim—the tribunal before which he had been adjudged to die. "Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councillor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."