

shape, the cross is set up, and the Saviour is stripped and nailed to it between two thieves. While the soldiers are occupied in this horrid work, Jesus prays—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The soldiers now sit down, and priests, scribes, elders, and people pass and repass under the cross, jibing and blaspheming till one of the thieves too joins in the railing. He is rebuked by the other, to whom Jesus says, in answer to his humble petition, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The Saviour then looks down, and, seeing John and Mary standing near enough to be spoken to, He utters His third word—John 19: 25-27.

Vv. 45-49.—And now the midday hour is come. Men have feasted on the sight of Jesus bleeding on the cross, and the representatives of religion and order have mocked Him. The sun will look on it no longer. A darkness as of total eclipse falls over all the land, probably a local and supernatural gloom, the sign of that great darkness which was gathering about the Saviour's Spirit, and the culmination of which is expressed in His bitter cry at the end on the three hours—v. 46. During those three mysterious hours, no word seems to have broken the awful silence. He is treading the wine-press alone. He is classed among the enemies of God, and counted accused by men, (Gal. 3: 13), being made a curse for us. He is bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. He is made sin for us. His bitter cry indicates two things:—(1) That it was not the pain, not even the hate and cruelty of men, that clouded His Spirit, but that, in some mysterious way, the wrath of God was poured out on Him, the beloved, on Him as our substitute, therefore; (2) That His faith was not shaken, for His cry still is, "*My God.*" Never was He more the beloved of His Father than at this hour.

The light breaks through the darkness, as He cries "*My God.*" and now the sense of physical need comes upon Him. "I thirst," is the fifth word, for all prophecy must be fulfilled by Him—Ps. 69: 21. One-by-stander—probably a Roman soldier—is touched with pity; and, taking a stalk of hyssop—a reed that, from the size of the plant we know must have been less than a yard long—he attaches a sponge to it, and, dipping that in the bucket of vinegar or thin wine that stood by for the use of the soldiers, he puts it to the lips of Jesus. At the same time, the unawed unfeeling crowd take up the Hebrew word for God, which He had just used, and mockingly bandy it about with the taunt

that He was calling upon Elias for help—till even the one who held the vinegar to His mouth repeats the taunt. Mark 15: 35-37.

V. 50.—The strength of Jesus is unexhausted, but His work is done. With a loud voice, He utters His sixth word—"It is finished;" and then, with the prayer from that same Holy Writ that He had found sufficient in every trial of His life—"Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," a little after three o'clock, or between the two evenings, He yielded up the ghost.

Vv. 51-53.—The attendant miracles.—Each of these has a meaning of its own. Hebrews 9th and 10th explain fully the first. There is now access to God for all by the new and living way. "The earth quaked, &c.," to show His victory over death at the moment of its seeming victory over Him. And, on the morning of His resurrection, some of the saints who had been in their graves arose, and appeared unto many,—a strange and most satisfactory pledge of the general resurrection.

V. 54.—The testimony of the centurion. From Mark 15: 39, it appears that he was especially impressed by the loud cry, instantly followed by death, so different from the usual slow death by exhaustion characteristic of crucifixion. Thus early did the cross show its power. A thief and a Gentile soldier are its two first trophies.

On the physical cause of the Lord's death, see last chapter of Hanna's book.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Resurrection*—Matt. 28: 1-8.

The story of the Resurrection is told differently by the four Evangelists, each giving the facts that impressed himself most, or that suited the purpose he had in writing.

Vv. 1-4.—Our Lord lay in the grave part of the sixth, the whole of the seventh, and the first hours of first day of the week. The Sabbath ended at six in the evening, and the women who had stood at the cross to the last, who had seen Him buried, and had prepared spices to embalm His body, came very early, on the morning of the first day of the week, to the sepulchre. Matthew names the two Marys; Mark adds Salome; and Luke adds "Joanna, and others with them." They may have come in two groups. From Mark 16: 2, 9, and from Matt. 28: 11, we infer that the resurrection took place not long before the coming of the women. The account of how it happened is given in v. 2-4, of the lesson.