

hen it was raised and the end fell into a hole dug for it. Both the hands and the feet of Jesus were nailed. (Luke xxiv. 39.) On a small tablet, called titulus, was inscribed, "This is the King of the Jews," and this was put over His head. It was a title of honour, and the Jews objected to it (comp. John xix. 20), but Pilate would not alter it to please them. Ver. 38 speaks of the two thieves, or rather robbers, who were crucified with Him. (Isa. liii. 12.) According to ver. 44) they both reviled Him; but if so, one of them soon relented, and was saved (Luke xxiii. 42, 43). The passers-by reviled Him; but they know not what they said. He saved others because He would not save Himself. 2 Cor. v. 21 is the memory text, and teaches us the great doctrine of substitution, or the innocent one suffering for the guilty. He was made a sin-offering for us.

Afternoon. THE PROMISE OF REVIVAL. (Hosea xiv. 1-9) This is a call to conversion. There is no salvation for man without a return to God. Sin is a false step by which we have fallen, and we must seek forgiveness in prayer. For this, not sacrifices but words are needed—the words of confession and entreaty. The calves of the lips are the prayers and thank-offerings presented in the stead of young oxen (Ex. xxiv. 5). Israel had relied on Assyria and Egypt. They will do this no longer. Riding upon horses refers to military power (Isa. xxxi. 1). Now they were learning that God alone could help, and that in Him alone the orphan could find compassion. Ver. 4-8 announce the answer to Israel's prayer. Here we have (1) a promise of healing, (2) of loss, (3) of abundant blessing. Jehovah will be as the refreshing dew, causing Israel to grow like a lily—the fragrant white lily of Palestine, which often produces fifty bulbs from a single root; and to strike his roots like Lebanon, which means not merely the forests of Lebanon, but the mountain itself. The smell of Lebanon was very sweet on account of its cedars and other trees (Song of Sol., iv. 11). This fine line has been thus explained:—The *rooting* means stability; the *spreading of the branches*, propagation, etc.; the *splendour of the olive*, beauty and glory; the *fragrance*, hilarity and loveliness. In ver. 7, Israel becomes a tree beneath whose shade the people flourish. The wine of Lebanon was celebrated for its excellence from the earliest times. Ver. 8 is an address to Ephraim. God says to Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" and Ephraim wishes to have nothing more to do with them. (God is like a fresh green cypress tree, and from Him alone can the nation find the fruit which nourishes its spiritual life. Ver. 9 points back to Deut. xxxii. 4. The ways of Jehovah are straight, and lead those who walk in them to life. But transgressors stumble in them to their own destruction. Learn xiii. 9, which is this lesson in a few words.)

June 17. Morning. DEATH AND BURIAL OF CHRIST. (Matt. xxvii. 45, 61.) The sixth hour was twelve at noon. Then the darkness began, and lasted three hours. It could not be occasioned by an eclipse, as the moon was full. It was no doubt supernatural; and it covered the whole land. Just before the close of it, Jesus uttered the bitter cry, "Eli, Eli," etc.; given by Mark in the Syro-Chaldaic dialect, "Eloi, Eloi," etc. What did it mean? Not that He was actually forsaken, for he could still say, *My God!* but that the agony of His mind was such that it seemed, for the moment as if he were forsaken. "Some said He called for Elias," the conscience of some Jews perhaps bringing to their memory that Elijah was to appear on the day of vengeance. Previously Jesus had said, "I thirst" (John xix. 28); and one, probably in compassion, ran, and dipped a sponge in the posca, or sour wine, of the Roman soldiers, and put it on a hyssop reed, and gave Him to drink. Jesus drank it, and then cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!"—the victor's shout (John xix. 30); and then, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"—the joyful assurance that He had fulfilled His Father's will; and the darkness passed away; and there was light at evening time. He did not die under a cloud. And the veil of the Temple was rent (verse 51); this veil was the one which hung before the Holy of Holies (Heb. vi. 19; ix. 6; x. 19). Doubtless the earthquake which rent the rocks rent this veil also; and several graves in the neighbourhood were laid open; and after Christ's resurrection many bodies of the saints arose, their spirits having been delivered from Hades. Some say they ascended with Christ to heaven; but the difficulties cannot be explained, and the fact is mentioned nowhere else. The centurion (verse 54) was presiding over the executions. His saying meant, according to St. Luke, "a just man"; but he knew something of Jewish opinions, and may have supposed that

Christ was a Divine Being, or as the heathen would have said, a kind of demi-god. The women (verse 56, cf. Luke viii. 2, 3) were faithful to the last; but the virgin-mother had been taken home (John xix. 27). The *even* was the decline of day—the first even. The bodies must be removed before the second evening, or the nightfall (Deut. xxi. 23). Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus, and a rich man. Arimathea was probably Rama—Ramathaim, in Ephraim (1 Sam. i. 19). He went into the praetorium, and begged the body of Jesus (cf. John xix. 38). It was a bold act; but it succeeded; and with Nicodemus, as John says, he wrapped it with spices in a clean linen cloth, rolling it around the limbs separately. He then laid it in his own new tomb, which John says was near, and in a rock, and he closed the mouth of it with a great stone. Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, i.e., the wife of Josas, beheld where He was laid. But where was the sepulchre? We do not know, though conjectures have been many. Mr. Fergusson maintains that it was under the dome of the present Mosque of Omar, where there is a cave entered by a flight of steps.

Afternoon. THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL. (2 Kings xvii. 1-23.) *Shalmanu-er*, or *Salmannassar*, was the Sargon of Isaiah xx. 1. On the monuments of Assyria his name is spelt *Sargina*. He first made *Hoshea* a subject, compelling him to pay tribute, but *Hoshea* rebelled, and sought assistance from *Saor*, or *Shabaz*, king of Egypt. Then *Shalmanu-er* took Samaria. *Hoshea* was cast into prison, and the Israelites were carried captive into Assyria. Gozan was a fertile tract of land watered by the river *Habor*, or *Khabour*, which is one of the tributaries of the Tigris. *Halah*, or *Kalah*, was probably the *Gila*, one of a line of hills on the upper *Khabour* (see Layard's "Nineveh and Babylon," pp. 300-313). In ver. 7-23 the causes which led to this catastrophe are given. The people had set up images and groves—*golden calves* and *asherim*, or sacred idols, or calves—masses of stone, as gods, against the express commands of God. (1 Kings x. 16-23.) They made two golden calves, and *Asherah* (a grave), i.e., idols of *Astarte*, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served *Baal* (ver. 16). *Baal* was the sun-god; *Astarte*, or *Asherah*, the moon-god (see 1 Kings xii. 28). The ten tribes (ver. 22) walked in all the sins of Jeroboam until Jehovah removed them from His sight. (Hos. i. 6, ix. 16, etc.)

June 24. Morning. THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH. (Matt. xxviii.) At the dawn of Sunday, or before sunrise, came Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, etc., together with Salome (Mark xvi. 1), and Joanna, etc. (Luke xxiv. 1) to see the sepulchre, and to anoint the body. There had been an earthquake, and an angel had rolled away the stone, and now he sat upon it. The women were afraid, but their fears were hushed (ver. 5, 6). By His disciples (ver. 7) are meant all the Galilean disciples, and the grand manifestation of Himself to them took place in Galilee (ver. 16). With mingled feelings they ran quickly when Jesus met them. He first met Mary Magdalene (John xx. 14), and, she having bounded off, the other women a little later. What a message she gave them (ver. 9, 10). The soldiers brought their account, and the chief priests were alarmed (ver. 11-14). And they gave the guard large bribes to tell a falsehood. What will not some men do for money? The guard would be charged with a neglect of duty; but they were promised protection, and the matter was "talked over" with Pilate, and the matter was thus arranged, perhaps privately. How absurd the story, yet some believe it to this day. The event narrated (ver. 16-20) did not take place until after those narrated by St. John (xx. 19-29), but perhaps before those of ch. xxi. The mountain is supposed by some to have been Tabor. Here he met 500 brethren (1 Cor. xv. 6), and they worshipped Him, but some were in doubt whether it was really Jesus whom they saw. He, therefore, drew men to them, and specially to the doubting ones, and said, "All power is given to Me, etc." They were therefore to go and *make disciples*, baptising them *into*, not *in*, the name of the Father, etc. All limitations, such as in ch. x. 6, are now removed, and their commission is a universal one. After baptism comes teaching, that is, more full and complete instruction in the things of God. Jesus adds the glorious promise, "Lo, I am with you," always. In the person of the Holy Spirit, as well as in His own personal agency in or through His Word, He would remain with His Church to the end of time (John xiv. 16-26). The word *always* is emphatic, meaning literally every day, even the darkest, so that on this promise we may rest in the midst of the most untoward events. 1 Cor. xv. 20, is the text for repetition. Christ rose as the first-fruits of them that sleep.