

## ARTICLE III.

THE LAST DAYS OF CHRIST; EXEGETICAL NOTES ON  
THE BASIS OF MARK XIV. 17—XVI. 20.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Verses 55-65. — Christ condemned by the Sanhedrim, and mocked by the Servants.

Ver. 55. Matthew's correspondent text (xxvi. 59-68) is almost literally accordant with Mark, and that of Luke (xxii. 63-71) is consistent with Mark, but less full. The Sanhedrim or senate consisted properly of seventy members, and of three distinct orders. One of these orders was that of the high-priest at the time and the heads of the twenty-four classes into which the Hebrew priesthood was divided; the second, that of the elders, who were men of mature age, and held offices in the synagogues; and the third, that of scribes, eminent for their knowledge of the Scriptures and of Jewish law. Both Matthew (xxvi. 59) and Mark in this passage represent this particular session of the body as very full.

*Were seeking* (ἐζήτουν) implies that they found it difficult readily to procure the needed witnesses on this occasion. When Matthew says (xxvi. 59) that they sought false witnesses, he means, of course, that such was the character of those whom they found, and not that they preferred such because they were false, rather than true, in their testimony. They wanted damaging testimony, whether true, false, or perverted.

Ver. 56. Though many testified, the accusations were false, and were manifestly such, as their inconsistency (*οὐκ ἴσας, not equal*) showed.

Ver. 57. As a final resort (note Matthew's *ὕστερον, afterwards*) they charge him with blasphemy against the Temple and Him who was worshipped there. Mark does not mention

the number of witnesses; but Matthew says they were two, — just the number which the law required (xxvi. 60).

Ver. 58. *I will destroy* represents Christ as casting contempt on the Temple, as one not fit to be used for God's worship, and claiming an ability to rear another, not in forty years, as was true of Herod's Temple, but in three days. The reference here is to John ii. 19, where, in reply to the question "What sign showest thou?" the Saviour answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He referred to his own body, the soul's habitation (not an uncommon expression), and in all probability accompanied the words with a gesture which pointed out the application of them as he uttered them. The Jews afterwards maliciously perverted his language when they saw they could use it for his injury. The epithet "built with hands" they interpolated, as a contemptuous disparagement of God's holy sanctuary.

Ver. 59. And yet even then, though they summoned the two false witnesses who agreed in the falsification, these witnesses differed in some points which before a just tribunal would have invalidated the testimony. Some of the priests who after the resurrection of Christ believed on him and joined the company of his followers (see Acts vi. 7) may have been at this time in the court, and may have divulged some of its secrets.

Ver. 60. *Rising up* (*ἀναστὰς*) and stepping forward into the middle of the room makes the act one of special formality. The double negative makes the question = "Dost thou answer nothing at all?" This persistent silence on the part of Christ leads the high-priest to ask in yet more earnest tones of both wonder and reproach, as Matthew records (xxvi. 63), "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou art the Christ the Son of God." Mark's words convey the same meaning, but less energetically expressed. Luke gives a part of Christ's answer (xxii. 67), "If I shall say to you that I am the Christ ye would not believe." He reports, also, the significant intimation of our Lord that if he should

assume the part of questioner he would be able to ask his judge questions which he neither would nor could answer in accordance with truth or his own conscience (xxii. 68).

Ver. 62. Jesus was silent as to any reply that was demanded to the false charges against him. But when the high-priest inquires respecting his claim to be the Messiah, he is not silent, but admits that claim, and re-asserts it in the most solemn and impressive manner. He avows, also, that he is the Son of man, as well as the Messiah and Son of God (Luke xxii. 69), under which titles the prophets foretold that the Messiah would appear when he manifested himself here upon earth.

Jesus not only declares that he has a legitimate claim to these titles regarded by his judges as so impiously assumed by him, but that a time was coming when they themselves would see them confirmed by an attestation which would remove all doubt of its truthfulness, and fill them with surprise and consternation. Nearly all interpreters understand that Jesus refers here to his coming at the day of judgment, when he will make the difference between his friends and rejectors fully manifest to them and to all mankind.

Ver. 68. This act of the high-priest shows that he fully comprehended the significance of this claim to the Messiahship and divine sovereignty which the answer of Jesus implied. He declares his horror and abhorrence of that claim by the most expressive symbol known to Hebrew ritualism. The garments of the Jews were open under the chin, and a person had only to take them at the ends there, and so rend them apart down to the waist. The high-priest, it is said, was not allowed to rend his sacred vestments under any circumstances; but these vestments he wore only when he went into the holy of holies. The rending on this occasion, therefore, was not a departure from that rule.

Ver. 65. These indignities were not uncommon among the Jews after a culprit had received his sentence of death. The only requisite to that result in this case was now the sanction of the Roman government. When they called

upon him to prophesy (in the sense of that term here) they mean, "Tell us in the exercise of your prophetic or super-human knowledge, blindfolded as you are, who the individuals are that are striking you at this or that moment."

#### CHAPTER XV.

Verses 1-5.—Christ led by the Sanhedrim to Pilate.

Ver. 1. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not among these; or, at all events, if they went, it was with a very different spirit. The residence of Pilate was the praetorium, so called (John xviii. 28), i.e. the house or palace of the praetor or chief magistrate of the Roman government. It was probably the former palace of Herod the Great, which was on the northern side of Mount Zion, though some suppose it the fortress of Antonia, at the northwest corner of the temple-court, where the Turkish garrison stands at the present day. The Jewish rulers did not themselves enter the praetorium, because to enter the palace, or any house occupied by idolaters, at such a time would have disqualified them for keeping the Passover, on which they had now just entered (John xviii. 28). John's language here requires this explanation (of which it so readily admits), unless we suppose, against all probability, that Jesus and his disciples had anticipated the usual time of keeping the Jewish Passover. The eating of the lamb and unleavened bread was only the initial act, and was followed by a similar abstemiousness and scrupulosity for a series of succeeding days. At this point of the narrative Matthew (xxvii. 3-10; cf. Luke, Acts i. 18, 19) mentions the death of Judas and some of its peculiar circumstances. We have evidently in these writers only a fragmentary account of this suicide of the traitor. It certainly was not repentance, in the proper sense of that word, which led Judas to put an end to his life. We read in Acts that the priests to whom Judas returned the money which they paid him for his treachery purchased a field with it which they set apart for the burial of strangers who might not otherwise have had any place of interment. For the

solution, or attempted solution, of the questions which arise out of this part of the narrative, allow me to refer you to the note on Acts in my Commentary, pp. 43-46; also to Ebrard, Gospel History, pp. 427 ff.; also Smith's Bible Dictionary, Article on Judas Iscariot (Vol. ii. pp. 1495-1503). The supplement to that Article by Professor Park adds very much to its value, both in its theological and its exegetical connections.

Ver. 2. This verse receives its explanation from Luke xxiii. 2. The Jews, as we see there, had virtually charged Jesus with refusing to pay the Roman tribute, and instigating the Jewish people to do the same, thus setting himself up as king, to whom the Jews owed allegiance, and not to the Roman government. Hence the first question, as reported by the four evangelists, is expressly, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus replies to that question by asking another: "Is it for your own information, and as a Roman magistrate, because you have a duty to perform in that office, that you ask this question?" (John xviii. 34). This conversation between Christ and Pilate need not have taken place through an interpreter, since the Greek language was spoken at this period more or less by many Jews, and especially in Galilee, where Jesus had lived in his earliest years. The Roman proconsuls and procurators needed this knowledge almost as an official requisite. Pilate repudiates the idea involved in Christ's inquiry respecting the source of his knowledge of the case, that he was acting at all under a Jewish instigation. The reply of Jesus is, that if he were a worldly prince, and seeking to place himself at the head of the Jewish nation, he would appear at that moment in a very different attitude. Instead of standing there alone and defenceless, "my followers would at this moment be fighting [note the impf.] to prevent my being delivered to the Jews my enemies." *Thou sayest* ( $\Sigma\upsilon\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ) means that the implication in Pilate's question was correct. The four evangelists record this answer, "I am a king," but of course not in a worldly sense, as Pilate himself would see more and more distinctly in the progress of the trial.

Ver. 3. The high-priest would naturally first declare his testimony, and then the others, one after another.

Ver. 4. The falsehood and malignity of Christ's accusers were such that he made no reply to them. A sincere and honest question he never failed to answer; but one prompted by a malicious or captious spirit he would not answer. Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (John xviii. 38) was asked, in all probability, in a contemptuous tone; for otherwise Christ would have taken an opportunity to answer his inquiry. We seem to have here an example of the spirit of almost universal scepticism which prevailed among the more cultivated Greeks and Romans of that age. It was a pastime of one of the Roman emperors of that period to assemble the great philosophers of his day at the palace, and amuse himself by listening to their wranglings upon such questions as What is religion? What is virtue? What is truth?

Ver. 5. Pilate at first regards this silence of Jesus as the more remarkable on account of the serious nature of the charges against him (*ἴδε πόσα, κ.τ.λ.*, ver. 4). The Jews affirmed that he not only claimed to be a king, but sought to instigate the people from Galilee to Judea to assert their own independence, and cast off the oppressive yoke of subjection to the Romans (see Luke xxiii. 4, 5). The Jews at first evidently wished to make their charges against Christ as vague as possible, because they knew that they had no legal indictment to offer which Pilate as a Roman magistrate could recognize (John xviii. 35). But Pilate, it would seem, had already fuller information respecting this case than they supposed, and replied to them that if they had any ordinary malefactor merely, as their language implied, they were at liberty to deal with him as their law required. They were obliged then to declare more fully that Jesus had been guilty of a capital crime, and what they desired was that he would authorize them to put him to death, because, as the accusers say, it was not lawful for them as Jews to exercise that right of capital punishment (John xviii. 30, 31). To suppose here that the Jews did have at this time the right of capital

punishment, as some think, obliges us to suppose either that the Jews declared what was false, and in the presence too of a Roman magistrate who must have known of course what the law on this subject was, — a falsehood which they could not have imposed on him, who had lived so long among the Jews, — or that John himself has apparently fallen into an error here. That the Jews had been deprived of this right at that time has been and still is the almost unanimous opinion of scholars and historians. “As to the time,” says Friedlieb (*Archäologie*, p. 96), “when this power was taken from the Sanhedrim, there is some uncertainty; but probably it occurred when Judea lost its independence, and was attached to Syria, A.D. 6.” Josephus says expressly that the Jews lost this prerogative about forty years before the destruction of the Temple. Josephus states also (*Antiq.* xx. 9, 1) that the Romans were so jealous of this right to administer justice and execute the sentence pronounced that Ananus was deposed from the high-priesthood, because, in the absence of the procurator Albinus, he had put to death James the brother of the Lord. Keim, in his *Geschichte Jesu* (3 vols. 1867–72), who makes it a specialty to trace out all the complicated relations of Christ’s history in the Gospels to the contemporary secular history by other writers, recognizes this accordance between John and such writers as unquestionable (see Vol. iii. p. 359). Says Farrar (*Life of Christ*, Vol. ii. p. 367) of the Jews’ reply to Pilate’s contemptuous exclamation, “Take ye him, and judge him according to your law”: “But now they are forced to the humiliating confession that, having been deprived of the *jus gladii*, they cannot inflict the death which alone will satisfy them.” All the leading commentators at present, I believe, agree in this interpretation. “The assertion of Selden,” says De Wette (see on John xviii. 31), “that this right of life and death remained to the Sanhedrim in matters of a religious nature has no support in Josephus (*Ant.* xiv. 10, 2–8; *Bell. Jud.* vi. 2, 4) or Acts (vii. 54–60). It is also in the highest degree arbitrary to put into the words of

the Jews the sense: It is not allowed us on a festival (Kuinoel), or for political offences, to put any one to death." The stoning of Stephen was a tumultuary act. Among other commentators who follow the same view are Tholuck, Winer, Lücke, Rückert, Olshausen, Meyer, Alford, Webster, and Wilkinson, etc.

Verses 6-14.—Pilate still seeks to release Jesus.

The mention of Galilee suggested to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 6) that possibly he might disengage himself from this case if he sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who had come to Jerusalem at that time to attend the Passover. This Herod was the murderer of John the Baptist, and had attempted at one time to put to death Jesus himself (Luke xiii. 31). The only result was that Pilate and Herod, who had been at variance, were reconciled, and Jesus, after being scourged and mocked, was sent back to Pilate's tribunal. It is noteworthy that the first Christians always thought of this Herod as one of the chief murderers of the Lord Jesus (see Acts iv. 27). That it was their common enmity to Christ which made these rulers friends on this occasion is hardly correct; for it does not agree with the manifest anxiety of Pilate to release Jesus.

Ver. 6. *At a feast (κατὰ ἑορτήν)*, viz. the Passover, on its annual recurrence (*κατά*). How or when this custom arose is unknown; but its object clearly was to gratify the Jews by such a recognition of the Passover, and to enable them to save some culprit for whom they felt a special sympathy. Matthew (xxvii. 15) and Luke (xxiii. 17) mention the custom, and do not name the Passover, in this instance; but John mentions the Passover as the occasion when the Jews could exercise this privilege. Two reasons, as Meyer says, may have led Pilate to suggest this Barabbas, rather than some other culprit; viz. that he bore the same name, as it were accidentally suggested to him (Meyer defends the insertion of the doubtful reading *Ἰησοῦν* before *Βαραββᾶν* in Matt. xxvii. 16, 17. See Alford *ad loc.*), and that he was so noted a criminal. The more infamous the person, the



more likely, he may have thought, will they be disposed to demand his punishment.

Ver. 8. The older reading here is *ἀναβὰς*, *having gone up*, and not *ἀναβοήσας*, *having cried out* (T. R. and A. V.). *Having gone up*, i.e. because Pilate while at Jerusalem would occupy either Herod's palace on Mount Zion or the castle of Antonia at the northwestern corner of the temple area. It was entirely natural for Mark, so familiar with Jerusalem, to show thus incidentally his exact topographical knowledge. *To ask*, i.e. the customary favor. The impf. *ἔποιε* states here not what he was doing, but what he was accustomed to do.

Ver. 9. Pilate directs his answer to the crowd, whom he would specially conciliate. He would have preferred, undoubtedly, that his preference in this case should have been their preference.

Ver. 10. *He knew* (*ἔγινωσκεν*) all along (impf.) what the motive was that made the chief priests so hostile to Christ. *On account of envy* (*διὰ φθόνου*), because Jesus had so much popularity and influence among the people at large.

Ver. 11. The priests and the elders (Matt. xxvii. 20) went hither and thither among the crowd, that they might by personal appeal and influence instigate the people to prefer Barabbas to Jesus for liberation. *That* (*ἵνα*) *he should rather*, etc., states here, in a manner akin to a specification of purpose, the contents of the demand which the people should make.

Ver. 12. Pilate does not yield at once to this demand, but makes still another appeal to their sense of justice and humanity. He calls him a king, not derisively, but because he knew that Jesus had produced a strong impression on the people, and perhaps remembered at that moment how lately many of them had followed him with palm-branches and hosannas as he entered Jerusalem.

Ver. 13. The priests and presbyters (Matt. xxvii. 20) had evidently now won the people to their side, and the shout is heard, again and again, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Ver. 14. The most of the uncial MSS. have *περισσῶς*, *exceedingly*, and not *περισσοτέρως*, *more exceedingly* (T. R. and A. V.). When Pilate asks here why Christ should be crucified (also Matthew xxvii. 23), he virtually protests against it. He charges the Jews, in reality, with demanding the crucifixion of one against whom they had produced no evidence of guilt.

Verses 15-19.—Pilate delivers up Jesus to Death.

Ver. 15. They had already demanded Barabbas instead of Christ (Matt. xxvii. 20), and Pilate yields now to that decision. Matthew adds that all the Jewish people (*πᾶς ὁ λαός*), when they saw Pilate wash his hands, saying, "I am innocent," etc., cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children." The origin of this custom of giving up a state prisoner at the Passover is unknown. Some think that it may have been introduced by the Romans; but John's language "You have a custom," etc. (xviii. 39), rather intimates that it had a Jewish origin. It was the policy of the Roman conquerors to leave such customs undisturbed in the provinces; and they would naturally regard any preference which the people might have as to the person who should be the object of this clemency. The scourging of Jesus was a part of the cruelty which one must suffer who was to be crucified. It was of itself a punishment almost equal to that of the crucifixion. The scourges or lashes which the executioners employed had often nails or pieces of bone attached to the leather strap, and very frequently the poor victims died under the torture (see Bib. Dict. i. p. 513). Jesus was also crowned with thorns, and mocked by the soldiers.

Ver. 16. *Within the court* (*ἔσω τῆς αἰλῆς*), i.e. the quadrangle of the procurator's mansion or palace. *Which is the praetorium* (*ὃ ἐστὶν πραιτώριον*), i.e. the mansion to which this court belonged was the praetorium or procurator's residence. The antecedent of *ὃ* is implied, rather than expressed. *The band* (*σπεῖρα*) is the Roman military guard of the procurator.

Ver. 17. The robe and thorny crown were mock emblems of royalty. The thorns were often so strong and sharp that every blow on the head would lacerate the flesh, and cause the blood to flow down the face and body of the sufferer.

Ver. 19. The striking was not a single blow, but repeated again and again (impf.), and not by one hand, but by many hands. *Bowing their knees* (lit. *placing* them, i.e. on the ground, in that derisive attitude. See Acts vii. 60 ; ix. 40). Matthew says (xxvii. 29) that in addition to the striking and spitting and kneeling, they placed a reed in his hand as a sceptre.

Verses 20-23.—After one more effort by Pilate to save him, Jesus is led forth to be crucified.

Ver. 20. The contents of John xix. 4-16 should be recalled here. Hoping that the spectacle of Jesus wearing the crown of thorns, bleeding from the stripes already inflicted on him, and arrayed in the mock robes, might soften the hearts of the Jews, Pilate brings Jesus forth to them once more, and, pointing to him, says: "Behold the man." The response was, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" "But I find no fault in him; and it must be your act, and not mine." On being told that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God he was still more alarmed; for he had already felt a mysterious fear in the presence of Christ. To his question, "Whence art thou, then?" Jesus gave no answer; for he had said already who he was, and what his claims were (xviii. 37). Pilate, after this, was still more desirous to release him. The message of Pilate's wife, who may have heard wonderful things concerning him through her Jewish attendants, and who, knowing that he was then on trial for his life, was perhaps constantly oppressed with the sense of his danger, may have made him more anxious. It is not expressly said that Pilate's wife's dream was supernatural, or that she regarded it as such. "In this dream," says an old legend, "Socrates appeared to Claudia [said to be her name], and pointed her to Jesus as the teacher whom men should follow." It is but another form

of Plato's saying, that some philosopher must yet come to teach them divine things, wiser than Greek had yet known. The Jews then availed themselves of the last expedient at their command. They threatened to complain of Pilate as false to Caesar; and he was now menaced not only with the loss of office, but of life itself. Pronouncing the sentence was a judicial act; and Pilate then ascended the tribunal for that purpose. It was in front of the praetorium, and consisted of a raised tessellated pavement, such as the Roman governors carried with them on their judicial circuits as an emblem of their authority. Its Hebrew term, *Gabbatha*, refers to its elevation, and its Greek name, *Διόστρωτον*, to its material or structure. *Led him out*, i.e. from the city, because it would have been a profanation to crucify him there. As was customary in such cases, he was required to carry his own cross to the place of crucifixion (John xix. 17). "A wicked man," says Plutarch, "is as sure to be punished, sooner or later, as a malefactor is who is carrying his own cross to the place of crucifixion."

Ver. 21. John says that Christ himself bore his cross (xix. 17); but Matthew, Mark, and Luke say that a certain Simon carried it for him. Both statements were true. The Saviour himself carried it as long as his strength allowed, and then the soldiers laid it on a Cyrenian stranger who happened to be coming just then in an opposite direction from the country (*ἀπὸ ἀγροῦ*). The soldiers were Roman soldiers, and would not care whether it was one Jew or another whom they impressed for this service. It is indicated here that Christ was crucified out of the city, and yet not far from it. Cyrene, whence this Simon came, was an opulent city in North Africa. The Cyrenians at Jerusalem were so many at this time as to have a synagogue of their own there (Acts vi. 9). The parts of the cross may have been put together like an inverted V and hung in this way over the neck. Mark informs us who Simon was by naming his sons; and the sons, therefore, must have been well known among Mark's readers. Mark wrote his Gospel at Rome,

and Paul, who wrote at Corinth (Rom. xvi. 13), salutes a Rufus at Rome who was a believer (see Bib. Dict., Art. *Rufus*). Jesus was followed to Golgotha by a crowd of women, who beat their breasts and bewailed him as they saw him led out to his crucifixion (Luke xxiii. 27).

Ver. 22. Mark explains Golgotha as meaning *place of a skull*. The most approved explanation of this name is, that it denotes a place slightly elevated and skull-shaped. The Latin designation, Calvary, which comes from the Vulgate, may or may not be meant to express the same meaning. That it was a place where the skulls of malefactors executed there were found is fanciful and improbable, because the Jews would not have suffered it, who were so careful to avoid everything Levitically unclean (see *Calvary*, Bib. Dict. i. 346). Though Christ was suffering so much at this moment, and was about to suffer so much more intensely, he forgot himself, and thought only of the distress of those who followed him weeping and wailing, who soon, in the judgments that were hastening to fall on the guilty city, would themselves suffer such hitherto unknown calamities (see Luke xxiii. 27-31).

Ver. 23. *Were giving* (*ἔδιδου*, impf.), but did not complete the act, because he refused what they offered to him. Matthew (xxvii. 34) describes the drink as wine mingled with gall, and Mark, as wine mingled with myrrh. The object, undoubtedly, was to render him less sensible to the physical sufferings which attended crucifixion in so many ways. This alleviation was often allowed, both when the sufferer was nailed to the cross, and during his prolonged agony on the cross, until death closed the scene. The gall and the myrrh, as many of the best scholars think, denote probably the same ingredient, and refer to the bitterness of the draught. The Saviour refused to partake of it, because it had a stupefying effect, and he preferred to suffer and die in the full consciousness of his faculties (see Bib. Dict. i. 862, Art. *Gall*).

## Verses 24-28.—The Crucifixion.

Ver. 24. The raiment of one crucified was a perquisite of the soldiers or executioners. It was left to themselves how they would distribute the parts in such a case. On this occasion they divided the garments into four parts, and assigned one part to each of the soldiers. But the *χιτών*, or tunic, which had a special value, they assigned by lot to the one to whom the lot fell (John xix. 24).

Ver. 25. *The third hour*, which Mark designates as that of the crucifixion, would be our nine o'clock A.M. It would naturally be only an approximate designation.

Ver. 26. The alleged crime was usually written on a placard attached to the perpendicular beam above the arms of the cross. The Greek term *ἐπιγραφή* does not denote this position, but only the words as written *on* (*ἐπί*) the placard itself. The alleged crime was, in effect, disloyalty to the Roman government, or treason. But Pilate chose this form of the accusation the more readily because it involved such an affront to the Jews that one who bore that title should die so ignominious a death. The Jews, therefore, remonstrated with Pilate for giving to him that title, but as a taunt to them he refused to change it. It was the more offensive because it was written in all the languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin—known to the dwellers at Jerusalem (John xix. 19-22).

Ver. 27. To add to the indignity of Christ's execution, the soldiers placed his cross between two other crosses, on which two robbers (*λῃσταί*) were suspended. It may have been, and probably was, done at the instigation of the Jews as a new and refined insult which their malice suggested. The proper Greek term for thief (*κλέπτης*) is never applied to these two malefactors. In this condition, and beginning already to feel the tortures of the dreadful death, he uttered the first of his so-called seven words from the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke xxiii. 34). See here Stier's "Words of Jesus," *ad loc.*

Verses 29-32.—Christ mocked on the Cross. Prayer of the Penitent Robber.

Ver. 29. Matthew (xxvii. 39) and Mark here agree almost word for word. The vicinity of the cross to the city, which so many were constantly entering or leaving, greatly increased the crowd of spectators. *Wagging their heads*, up and down, rather than from side to side. That movement would express their scorn more strongly than the movement from side to side, which is the sign rather of grief and sorrow. *Ah* (*Οὐά*) is here derisive. It expressed pity or contempt, according to the tone of the speaker. Compare our "Ah," as uttered in one way or another. John records (ii. 19) Christ's prediction of his death and resurrection, which the Jews perverted into this charge of destroying and rebuilding the Temple. John's language, as we read it, may seem to be obscure; but in all probability Jesus placed his hand on his breast as he spoke, and pointed out by that gesture the temple of which he spoke as that of his body. The body as the temple of the soul was not an uncommon expression. The Jews had no sufficient reason for misunderstanding Christ's language (see note on xiv. 58).

Ver. 30. They called upon him tauntingly to burst the cord which bound him to the cross, and show his power in that act over all the combined force and malice of his enemies.

Ver. 31. Matthew mentions the elders also, as joining with the chief priests and the scribes in this mockery. *Saved others* (*ἄλλους ἰσωσεν*), as he himself declared and his followers believed, but not truly, as this inability itself to save his own life now clearly showed. To suppose that the Jewish rulers meant here to concede the reality of Christ's miracles of healing in the case of others, but said that he was merely unable to perform the greater one of his deliverance now from the cross, would cause them to concede an attestation of his Messianic claims not safe for them to make in so public a manner.

Ver. 32. Some (as Alford) make the titles here the subject of the preceding verb, i.e. "Christ the King saved others,

who cannot save himself." We may more naturally refer these titles to what follows: "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down (so Meyer and others). *That we may believe* (*ὡς κ.τ.λ.*), viz. that he is the Messiah and King of Israel. Matthew and Mark speak of the robbers as if they both joined in the mockery of Christ; but Luke speaks (xxiii. 40) as if one only of them did this, while the other reproved him for this inhumanity. Some say, in explanation of this, that both of the robbers *at first* joined in this mockery, while Luke informs us that one of them repented, and reproved his accomplice for his impiety. But surely Matthew and Mark must have known of this penitence of the one malefactor, as well as Luke, and would be expected as well as Luke to mention it. The only natural explanation is, that they would say that even robbers, represented by one of them, actually there heaped on him insults as he hung on the cross. This use of the plural for the singular of the class or category is familiar in all languages. The penitent malefactor is now heard praying that Jesus would remember him when he came into his kingdom (Luke xxiii. 42). The language shows that he looked forward to that coming not as immediate, but as more or less future. The Saviour replies that before the day passed which then shone upon them he should be with him in paradise. This was Christ's second utterance from the cross. "The word 'paradise' [I quote the words of Godet here] seems to come from a Persian word signifying *park*. It is used in the form of פֶּרְדִּיס (Eccl. ii. 5; Song of Solomon iv. 13) to denote a royal garden. In the form *παράδεισος* it corresponds in the LXX to the word גַּן, *garden* (Gen. ii. 8; iii. 1). The earthly Eden once lost, this word 'paradise' is applied to that part of Hades where the faithful are assembled; and even in the last writings of the New Testament—the Epistles and the Apocalypse—to a yet higher abode, that of the Lord and glorified believers, the third heaven (2 Cor. xii. 4; Rev. ii. 7). It is paradise as a part of Hades which is spoken of here" (see Godet on Luke, Vol. ii. p. 835, transl.). See the parable of Lazarus



in Luke xvi. 19–31. Paul's language in 2 Cor. xii. 4 is that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. In the meantime the mother of Jesus and her sister and Mary Magdalene were standing near the cross (John xix. 25). John the beloved disciple was also there. Christ's third word spoken from the cross was, "Woman, behold thy son"; and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother." The tradition is that John remained in Palestine till the death of Mary, and then, freed from that filial guardianship, went for the first time into foreign lands. In the New Testament we find him still at Jerusalem as late as A.D. 50 (see Comm. on Acts, Introd. p. 24). Christianity has been reproached with setting up the claims of a universal philanthropy against the closer relationships of family and consanguinity. The spirit of Christianity, as impersonated in this act of Christ, repels most significantly such an imputation. John in his Gospel refers several times to himself, but, as here, always indirectly, and never by name.

Verses 33–37.—Jesus expires on the Cross, and Darkness prevails.

Ver. 33. The synoptists all agree here with reference to the time, the extent, and the duration of the darkness. A miracle like this just at this stage of the history, though so preternatural, seems to be almost a natural event. *Upon all the earth* (ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν) may of itself refer to the whole earth, or to the land of Israel alone. It would hardly seem that any moral or practical end would require here the widest sense of the expression. Jesus had now been on the cross, as John relates, from the sixth hour, i.e. in our time from twelve o'clock M., since the Jews reckoned from sunrise; while Mark speaks of the hour of crucifixion as the third hour, our nine o'clock, three hours earlier. To reconcile this difference, some think that John may have reckoned the hours from midnight, according to our mode and that of some ancient nations. In that case, his sixth hour would be our six o'clock, A.M.; and as the expression may refer to

the sentence, and not to the act of the crucifixion itself, the interval between his six o'clock and Mark's nine o'clock may have been spent in the necessary preparations for the execution. But so exceptional a mode of reckoning time, on the part of John, is improbable. The view of others is that Mark may have regarded the scourging and its attendant cruelties as the proper beginning of crucifixion, and thus he (and John) might in that sense assign the crucifixion to the third hour, or nine o'clock.

Ver. 34. Mark records here, and Matthew (xxvii. 46), Christ's fourth word from the cross. The difference in the form of the words is, that Mark represents the stricter Aramaean pronunciation, while Matthew gives more nearly the Hebrew form. *Hast forsaken me* (אֵשְׁרָתָנִי) is expressed by a Chaldee, not a Hebrew word. Instead of *θεός*, Matthew (xxvii. 46) has *θεέ μου* (cf. Paul in 1 Tim. i. 18), almost peculiar to Hellenistic Greek (see Winer, N. T. Gram. p. 63). *Hast forsaken me* is a very common expression in the Psalms, and is the language of one in affliction, who feels that what he suffers is laid upon him by God's appointment, and, almost on the point of despair, wonders why the infliction should have been necessary. It is not complaint, or arraignment of God's justice or benevolence, but amazement, as it were, that any cause should require that such a cup of suffering should be pressed to his lips. But the response in the heart of Christ to that inquiry is, as we know from the record of his life, "Not my will, O God, but thine be done." So in Mark xiv. 36, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Ver. 35. Those who speak here seem to be Jews, and not Roman soldiers; for the soldiers would not be likely to be so familiar with the history and office of the great Hebrew prophet. The Hebrew form of *My God* sounded so much like Elias that the mocking Jews caught at the similarity, and cried, "He calls for Elias." That prophet was regarded by the Jews as the special helper of those in distress, and the Jews here insult the dying Saviour as calling now upon this friend of the wretched.

Ver. 36. *A certain one* (τις) of the Jews, probably. This vinegar, or sour wine (ὄξος), was the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers, and probably was offered to Jesus here to strengthen him under his sufferings. The sponge may have happened to be there for some unknown reason, or, as some think (Farrar), may have been the cork of the vessel. The compassionate Jew, therefore, the cross being too high to be otherwise reached, fastened the sponge to a hyssop stalk, and lifted it to the lips of Jesus. Christ's fifth word from the cross — *I thirst*, διψῶ — John only records (xix. 28), while Mark here and Matthew (xxvii. 48) evidently presuppose that word as the reason for attempting to allay his thirst. From comparison of this verse with Matt. xxvii. 49, it would seem that this Jew, as he hastened to the cross, caught up the remonstrance of the other Jews, and repeated it, so as to gain time and effect his object before the others could hinder his purpose.

Verses 38-41. — The Veil of the Temple is rent; and the Women at the Cross lament the Death of Jesus.

Ver. 38. The rending of the veil mentioned by the three synoptists is probably to be viewed as an accompaniment, if not an effect, of the earthquake (Matt. xxvii. 51). The veil or curtain may be that which hung at the entrance of the sanctuary (*ναός*), or that which screened the holy of holies from ordinary view. "By καταπέτασμα," says Neander, "it is most natural to understand the curtain before the holy of holies, for this was distinctively so called" (Life of Christ, p. 421, note). This view suggests more readily the symbolic significance which the rending in this case may be supposed to possess. Since Christ has died, and abolished the handwriting or sentence of the law which condemned us, we now may all have in the name of Christ free access to the mercy-seat, and need not any more the priestly intercession or blood of bulls and goats, but can all, each one for himself, come directly to God, and have Christ's atoning blood sprinkled on us to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. A wall of partition

also separated Jews and Gentiles from each other in the outer court of the Temple. On that wall was written in Latin and Greek, "No foreigner may go further, on penalty of death." Paul alludes, no doubt, to that separating partition in Eph. ii. 14, and speaks of it as broken down by the death of Christ; for it abolishes all such distinctions, and brings all nations on the same common ground as regards their participation in the blessings of the Gospel (see Ellicott, Com. on Ephes., *ad loc.*). The rending, therefore, of this veil signified that the old economy had accomplished its end, and was now giving place to the reality of the things which the types had merely foreshadowed. Matthew (xxvii. 52, 53) states, as another effect of the earthquake, that the tombs of some who had believed on Christ and had died were opened, and that after Christ himself had risen the tenants themselves of these tombs thus opened arose and appeared to many. It should be noticed that their rising or return to life was after Christ himself had risen, and not when Christ died and the tombs were opened. *Saints* (*ἅγιοι*) is a New Testament term, applied only to believers in Christ, and the representation of their state after death as a sleep belongs essentially to the New Testament. We are led, therefore, to suppose that those who rose to life after Christ's resurrection belonged to the new or Christian dispensation. They were probably some of those who had believed on Christ during his ministry, and when he rose from the dead they returned with him, and showed themselves alive again, as pledges of Christ's victory over sin and death (see 1 Cor. xv. 23). "*Finished* — that is Christ's farewell greeting to earth. *Father, into thy hands* — that is his entrance greeting to heaven" (see Stier's Words of Jesus, *in loc.*).

Ver. 39. *The centurion* (*κεντυριών*, one of Mark's Latinisms) was the commander of the quaternion (Matt. xxvii. 54) who had charge of the crucifixion. *So died* (*οὕτως*) some understand (so Alford) of the physical energy with which Christ uttered his last words; but others, more correctly, of the various wonders connected with Christ's death

(Matt. xxvii. 54) which showed him to be God's Son, as claimed by him that he was, ἀληθῶς. Nor was the centurion alone affected thus, but also the women who had followed him from Galilee (Matt. xxvii. 55); and not only they, but many of the promiscuous crowd (Luke xxiii. 48) whom chance or curiosity had brought thither. Some of them were so impressed that they smote upon their breasts with fear and sorrow, and, unable to endure the sight, turned away and went back into the city.

Ver. 40. The women here who were last at the cross we find afterwards first at the sepulchre. We must glance here a moment at what John relates (xix. 31-37). As a general rule, the Romans did not remove the bodies of those crucified from the cross. They let them remain until the flesh was consumed, or to be eaten by birds of prey or wild beasts. Their sufferings were not alleviated or shortened; but they were left to a lingering death. Yet sometimes they hastened death by a fire kindled under them, or allowed them to be torn in pieces by wild beasts. The breaking of the legs of culprits was sometimes a punishment by itself. It was not an ordinary part of the crucifixion, but in the case of the malefactors here was allowed by Pilate at the request of the Jews, who were unwilling that the bodies should remain on the cross during the Sabbath just at hand, and so much the more because it was the great Sabbath of the Passover-week. The soldiers, therefore, broke the legs of the robbers on the right and on the left side of Christ; but, finding that he was dead already, refrained in his case from that unnecessary cruelty. But yet, to satisfy himself that no spark of life still remained in Christ, one of the soldiers pierced his side, and immediately there came forth blood and water. That stroke of the spear had reached the heart, and detached the serum in the pericardium from the blood — an infallible proof, as physicians inform us, that death had taken place. But it was proof, in all probability, of still more than that, viz. that Jesus had died of a broken heart. See the treatise on *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*,

by the physician W. Stroud, London, 1847. By this piercing of the side of Jesus still other scriptures were fulfilled: "Not a bone of him shall be broken (Ex. xii. 46; Ps. xxxiv. 20); and, "They shall see him whom they have pierced" (Zech. xii. 10; Ps. xxii. 16, 17). John not only records this fact, but, as if aware that some might deem it incredible, asseverates it as certainly true, on his own emphatic testimony (ver. 35-37). Friedlieb, with other German writers, as also Godet, refers to this treatise of Dr. Stroud as a work of high medical authority.

Verses 42-47. — The Body taken from the Cross, and laid in the Sepulchre.

Ver. 42. The *evening* here (*ἑψίας*) was the first of the two evenings, extending from the middle of the P.M. to sunset. *Preparation*, i.e. for any Sabbath when it occurs, and hence the noun here is anarthrous. Mark explains that preparation to mean Sabbath evening; for he writes for foreigners, not familiar with all Jewish customs.

Ver. 43. "Each evangelist," Godet remarks here, "characterizes Joseph in his own way. Luke: a counsellor *good and just*; he is the *καλὸς κἀγαθός*, the Greek ideal. Mark: an *honorable* counsellor; the Roman ideal. Matthew: a *rich* man; is not this the Jewish ideal?" (Godet on Luke, Vol. ii. p. 341 transl.). Arimathea is probably the Greek form of the name Ramathaim (1 Sam. i. 1), the birthplace of the prophet Samuel. At a later period the boundary was changed so that this place was in Judea (1 Macc. xi. 34). Luke says (xxiii. 51) that it was a city of the Jews at this time. But Joseph had removed from his native place to Jerusalem, and hence had a tomb there. *Boldly* (*τολμήσας*), because it required courage on his part to make himself known as a friend of Jesus, whom the Jewish rulers had murdered, and all of whose followers they were determined, if possible, to extirpate. *And asked the body, not begged*, as that stronger sense seems incongruous here, and not required by the usage.

Ver. 44. *Wondered* (*ἐθαύμασεν*), i.e. felt and expressed surprise that Jesus should be dead already (*ἤδη*). It implied some doubt on his part whether it could possibly be true. Pilate must have been familiar with this mode of inflicting capital punishment. *If he was a long time dead*, because Pilate must know it as a certainty before he could surrender the body.

Ver. 45. It was not uncommon among the Romans to allow friends to receive and inter the bodies of those executed in this manner. In this office was associated with Joseph Nicodemus, probably a member of the Sanhedrim (John iii. 1) and a teacher of the law (John iii. 10). He had protested in the Sanhedrim against the injustice of condemning Jesus to death without hearing him in self-defence (John vii. 51). In the three notices of Nicodemus in John's Gospel we trace a marked gradation from one degree of Christian interest and courage to another; and in that respect, as Tholuck suggests, the narrative is seen to be "psychologically true" (see Tholuck, Com. on John, p. 205, German ed.). The synoptists pass over the co-operation of Nicodemus in the entombment of Christ's body; but John mentions it (xix. 39), and almost, one would think, to supply an omission in the other writers which he had noticed.

Ver. 46. John states that they placed Christ's body in a sepulchre, because the Sabbath was nigh (xix. 42), but does not explain how they could use that sepulchre for such a purpose. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say nothing here of the Sabbath, but mention or imply that the tomb belonged to Joseph, who was a friend and disciple of Christ. In this burial of Christ in such a tomb (all the evangelists record it) was fulfilled Isaiah's prediction (liii. 9), "And he made his grave with the rich in his death." The English deist Bolingbroke, referring to that chapter of the prophet which foretold so minutely the sufferings and death of the Messiah, makes a remarkable confession. He says that our Lord purposely brought about his own execution at the hands of the Jews that he might give his followers the benefit of the

argument that he had fulfilled the predictions supposed to refer to him in the Old Testament. Probably the large stone rolled to the door (Matt. xxvii. 60) was not accidentally there, but one adjusted to the aperture as a part of the tomb.

Ver. 47. This Mary the mother of Joses and wife of Clopas is called in Matthew, "the other Mary," and is supposed to be a sister of Christ's mother (see Bib. Dict., Vol. iii. p. 1812). Some epithet, as "Mary first" and "Mary second" would distinguish them in the family from each other. This use of the same name by different members of the same family was not uncommon also among the Greeks and Romans. The mother of Jesus is not mentioned here, who had probably left the cross before the death of Christ, under the care of John, to whom the Saviour had committed her. *Were beholding* (*ἐθεώπων*), or viewing, as they sat opposite the tomb; because they watched, naturally, every step taken and every arrangement made, so as to return after the Sabbath, and perform the remaining funeral rites which they meditated (see Luke xxiii. 55). Hence, having returned, they prepared fragrant spices or herbs and unguents, and on the coming of the eve of the Sabbath rested. Mark (xvi. 1) says they made purchases when the Sabbath was past,—i.e. in the evening of the following day,—which is not inconsistent with what Luke states; for it may be understood of additional purchases which they found to be necessary or desirable. It has been asked why these women should wish to embalm the body of Jesus, since he had foretold that he would rise from the dead. It may be that after such a disappointment of their hopes by his death their faith was not so unwavering as it should have been, though their affection for his memory was unchanged. Or, as in the case of the penitent robber, they may have thought he would return after his ascent to heaven in a glorified form, and not any longer in the body laid in the tomb.

The next day the chief priests and some of the Pharisees' requested Pilate to station a guard at the tomb, and keep watch there till the third day; because Jesus had said that



he would rise again on the third day, and they feared that his body would be stolen, and the last deception would be worse than the first. He gave them that permission; and they sealed the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre (see Matt. xxvii. 62-66). This sealing was variously performed; but a simple method (adopted perhaps here) was the drawing of a slight cord or ribbon across the door, attached at both ends to the sides of the aperture. The slightest movement of the stone would break the seal, and show that the tomb had been disturbed, and if the body was gone, that it had been stolen. *Ye have a guard* (Matt. xxvii. 65); the quaternion is probably meant here, which was employed during the crucifixion, or a change of that guard. He gives them liberty to use it also for this occasion. De Wette, Meyer, and others render, *have a guard*, i.e. employ the guard you have. But if they had one already at their disposal, they would not need a suggestion of this nature. *As ye know* (*ὡς οἴδατε*) i.e. as securely as ye can make it with such a force. Two of the most important works, I may add here as we leave this branch of the subject, relating to the archaeology of the crucifixion, are Bynaens, *De Morte Christi*, and Lipsius, *De Cruce* (8d ed. 1597).

(To be continued).