

The Request of Joseph of Arimathea

to be allowed to have the Body of Jesus. Scarcely had the commotion which the town had been thrown into begun to subside in a degree, when the Jews belonging to the Council sent to Pilate to request that the legs of the criminals might be broken, in order to put an end to their lives before the Sabbath-day dawned. Pilate immediately dispatched executioners to Calvary to carry out their wishes.



Joseph of Arimathea then demanded an audience; he had heard of the death of Jesus, and he and Nicodemus had determined to bury him in a new sepulchre which he had made at the end of his garden, not far from Calvary. Pilate was still filled with anxiety and solicitude, and was much astonished at seeing a person holding a high position like Joseph so anxious for leave to give honourable burial to a criminal whom he had sentenced to be ignominiously crucified. He sent for the centurion Abenadar, who returned to Jerusalem after he had conferred with the disciples who were hidden in the caverns, and asked him whether the King of the Jews was really dead. Abenadar gave Pilate a full account of the death of our Lord, of his last words, and of the loud cry he uttered immediately before death, and of the earthquake which had rent the great chasm in the rock.

The only thing at which Pilate expressed surprise was that the death of Jesus should have taken place so quickly, as those who were crucified usually lived much longer; but although he said so little, every word uttered by Joseph increased his dismay and remorse. He instantly gave Joseph an order, by which he was authorised to take down the body of the King of the Jews from the Cross, and to perform the rites of sepulture at once. Pilate appeared to endeavour, by his readiness in granting this request, to wish to make up, in a degree, for his previous cruel and unjust conduct, and he was likewise very glad to do what he was certain would annoy the priests extremely, as he knew their wish was to have Jesus buried ignominiously between the two thieves. He dispatched a messenger to Calvary to see his orders executed. I believe the messenger was Abenadar, for I saw him assisting in taking Jesus down from the Cross. When Joseph of Arimathea left Pilate's palace, he instantly rejoined Nicodemus, who was waiting for him at the house of a pious woman, which stood opposite to a large street, and was not far from that alley where Jesus was so shamefully ill-treated

when he first commenced carrying his Cross. The woman was a vendor of aromatic herbs, and Nicodemus had purchased many perfumes which were necessary for embalming the body of Jesus from her. She procured the more precious kinds from other places, and Joseph went away to procure a fine winding-sheet. His servants then fetched ladders, hammers, pegs, jars of water, and sponges, from a neighbouring shed, and placed them in a handbarrow similar to that on which the disciples of John the Baptist put his body when they carried it off from the castle of Macherus.