

December 15. The Descent from the Cross

by J.R. Miller

Transcript

"When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb"
Matthew 27:59, 60

According to the Roman custom, the bodies of those who were crucified were left hanging until they were eaten by birds and wild beasts. This barbarous custom being revolting to the Jews, an exception was made in their favor, and burial was permitted. If relatives or friends made application "the body of a crucified man would be given to them to be interred as they saw fit; but if none came" it was thrown into a pit. Had it not then been for Joseph and Nicodemus, the body of Jesus would have been cast, with the bodies of the robbers by His side "into the common receptacle for criminals. Thanks to the love of these hitherto secret disciples, though dying on a cross "our blessed Lord was buried like a king.

We may dwell with loving thought upon the scenes of this hour.

First, the body was taken down, not by the crude, unfeeling soldiers "but by Joseph himself, aided by Nicodemus, and probably by some other friends. How tenderly this would be done "we can imagine when we think of the love that was in the hearts of these friends. Then the blood was washed from the face, hands, feet, and side.

Next, the body was wrapped in the linen, with the spices and the ointments. Then, with farewell kisses impressed on the silent lips by the loving, sorrowing friends who stood by "the face was covered with the napkin, and the cold form was tenderly borne to the sepulcher near at hand, amid garden plants and flowers, and was laid away to rest.

We cannot study this scene of the burial of our blessed Lord, without rich spiritual profit. Shall we not, for one thing, seek to carry away a spirit of loving gentleness which shall make our love deeper and our touch softer "as we go out among sorrowing ones?

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