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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873. INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, December 7th.

Jesus before the Governor.—Matt. xxvii. 11-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth." Isaiah liii. 7.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 20-25.

SUMMARY.—Pilate knew the right but dared not do it, and for fear of the Jews he condemned the guiltless and released the guilty.

ANALYSIS.—I. The trial of Jesus. vs. 11-14. II. Pilate's attempt to save him. vs. 15-23. III. The final result. vs. 24-27.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 11.—And Jesus stood before the governor. The word "governor" has here its general meaning of one who governs, or is at the head of affairs. The exact official title of Pilate is Procurator, an officer sent by a Roman emperor to a subject province to have "charge of the imperial revenues," and "to judge in causes connected with it." "Sometimes in a small territory, especially in one contiguous to a large province [of the Roman empire], and dependent upon it, the procurator was head of the administration, and had full military and judicial authority, though he was responsible to the governor of the neighboring province. Thus Judea was attached to Syria upon the deposition of Archelaus (A. D. 6.) and a procurator appointed to govern it, with Cæsarea for its capital." In the line of its procurators Pontius Pilate was the sixth, and was appointed A. D. 26; so that the whole period of our Lord's official activity fell within the period of Pilate's administration. The character of Pilate will reveal itself as we proceed. Josephus mentions three acts of his administration of which the New Testament makes no mention, and which provoked, or almost provoked each an insurrection of the Jews. The first was the removal of his army's head quarters from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, with the standards on which were the emperor's image. The second, the hanging up in his palace at Jerusalem of some gilt shields inscribed with the names of deities; and the third, the appropriation of "the revenue arising from the redemption of vows (Corban; compare Mark vii. 11) to the construction of an aqueduct." "It was the custom for the procurator to reside at Jerusalem during the great feasts, to preserve order; and accordingly, at the time of our Lord's last Passover, Pilate was occupying his official residence in Herod's palace." "John xviii. 28, where the word translated "judgment-hall," mean palace, or governor's residence." It seems from verse 2 that the Jewish Sanhedrim, after the mock trial took him to Pilate, not only that death might be visited upon him, but that this death might be by crucifixion. John xviii. 31, 32. The Jews had not by law the power of death, and when they inflicted it, it was by stoning. See Acts vii. 57-59. The governor asked him. We miss here the form of trial by jury. Arbitrary power is in exercise. Art thou the King of the Jews? A question occasioned by the chief charge against Christ, on which the Jews relied for success. Luke xxiii. 2. For the charge of blasphemy, on which the Sanhedrim condemned him, Pilate cares nothing. John xviii. 31. It is only the political, not the religious charge that he, as Roman procurator, can regard. The dishonesty of the Jews is here, as all through, obvious and gross. They knew that Christ did not pretend to be a civil or earthly king, and because he would not consent to be they were furious; yet here to destroy him, they urge in effect that he did pretend to be just that. To unmask this villainy Christ extends his reply to Pilate. John xviii. 34-37. Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest; i. e., yes, I am; I am just that which thou sayest. A good confession, teaching us never through fear to conceal the truth, when the occasion requires us to speak. Verse 12.—Accused of the chief priests and elders. Members of the Sanhedrim which had just declared him worthy of death as a blasphemer. Answered nothing. See chap. xxvi. 62, 63. If it had been a true, honest trial, a real investigation, he would have answered; but when wrath

and untruth prevailed in everything, there was no call for an answer. Hearst thou not how many things, etc. Pilate could not understand why this man, of whose history he knew something, and whose conduct so commanded his respect, should make no answer to the charges when his life was at stake, and opportunity had been given him to clear himself. Verse 14.—To never a word To no question that was put to him by Pilate. Marvelled greatly. Strange as it seemed that Jesus did not answer his accusers, it seemed still more strange that he did not even answer the friendly questions of the governor. This, however, like the previous silence, was the silence not of contempt, but of prudence and self-respect. He would not enter into a controversy or inquiry which was not governed, and would not be decided, by principles of truth and justice. Yet we find that to Pilate's taunt and threat that he had supreme power over him, Christ does make answer. John xix. 11. But this was not to influence the mock trial, but to state a great truth for the future good of the world. Verse 15.—There has been much inquiry as to the origin of this custom. It was not prescribed by the Jewish law, to which it was rather contradictory. Ex. xxi. 12. It has been naturally suggested that it was introduced by the Romans to please the Jews. Verse 16.—On the character of Barabbas, see Mark. 7; Luke xxiii. 19; John xviii. 40. Wherein was he "notable," Matthew does not say. Verse 17.—When they were gathered together. Between the time referred to in verse 12, and this gathering together, we find from Luke xxiii. 6-12, that Jesus had been sent to Herod, tetrarch or ruler of Galilee, that his accusers followed him, and that Herod ridiculed the whole affair, and sent back the pretended king Jesus to Pilate. This gathering was of both the people, verse 15, and of the chief priests, etc., Luke xxiii. 13, and was outside of the palace or "judgment-hall." John xviii. 38. Verse 18.—He knew. Ah, Pilate, this is thy condemnation—thou didst know the right, and dared not do it. Perhaps Pilate hoped for the favor of the multitude to be shown to Christ on this account. Verse 19.—His wife. Whom tradition declares to have been a devout proselyte of the gate named Procla, or Claudia Procla. At this time Roman procurators might take their wives to their respective provinces, though at an earlier day Roman law prohibited it. This dream was naturally suggested by the exciting events in connection with her knowledge of Christ, yet we need not deny also the supernatural in it. Verse 20.—Persuaded the multitude. Inflamed and excited them with vehement urging. Verse 22.—What shall I do then? Pilate ought not to have asked the question; but, alas, he did not "dare to do right." Verse 24.—Took water and washed his hands before the multitude. This deed is thought to have been in imitation of the Jewish custom enjoined in Deut. xxi. But how vain for Pilate thus to declare by deed and word his innocence. He knew that he was not innocent, though they who delivered Christ to him had "the greater sin," John xx. 11. The mere declaration of innocence can never make one innocent! Verse 25.—Then answered all the people, and said. So publicly and formally did they confess their responsibility. His blood be on us, and on our children. And so it has been. Verse 26.—Then released he Barabbas. After he had vainly washed his hands in token of innocence he proceeded to do the guilty deed. But before this we find that he had an interview, a wonderful interview, with his wonderful prisoner in the palace, John xix. 8-11. He also made one more, a last and fruitless attempt, to turn the Jews from their murderous purpose. John xix. 14, 15. They saw that Pilate feared them, and they pressed their advantage in language and manner far from respectful to their governor. No wonder he hated the Jews afterward more than before, as appears from "his curt and angry refusal to alter the inscription" for the cross, from his ready consent to Joseph's request for Christ's body, and from his "sullen answer" to the Sanhedrim's petition that the sepulchre should be guarded. His sacrifice of principle to office did not save to him his office. He was subsequently accused to the president of Syria, sent to Rome to answer to the charges, and, Eusebius says, soon after killed himself; reminding us of Judas' end. Verse 27.—Then followed the blas-

phemous abuse and mockery, the riot of triumphant sin. QUESTIONS.—The subject of our last lesson? Of this? How was Christ brought to the Roman governor? vs. 2. Why did not the Jews put Christ to death, without regard to the Romans? John xviii. 30-32. Vs. 11. This governor's name? vs. 2. The nature of his office? What did he ask Christ? Why this? Luke i. 2. Christ's answer? Did he claim to be an earthly or civil king? John xviii. 36, 37. Vs. 12-14. Who accused Christ? Of what? Christ's reply? Pilate's question? Why his surprise? What did Christ do? Why his silence? What, according to Luke xxiii. 6-12, immediately followed? Vs. 15, 16. What custom is here named? Its origin? For what was Barabbas "notable"? Luke xxiii. 19; John xviii. 40. Vs. 17, 18. Pilate's question? Had he the power? Why did he not use it? John xix. 12. Vs. 20-23. What had the Jewish authorities done? vs. 20. What was the effect? Vs. 24, 25. Why did Pilate thus wash his hands? Deut. xxi. 6. What answer for the Jews? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 156. SUNDAY, December 14th.—The Crucifixion.—Matthew xxvii. 45-54. Youths' Department. WHO CAN SAVE FATHER! Who can save father from counters and bars. Heats of temptation and danger, and sin Heat up the bruises and banish the scars Liquor has left us without and within? We can bring father, my sister and I, Home from the tavern when tipsy and weak; But O, it is hard! Will nobody try? We can do nothing his habit to break. Who can keep father from liquor saloons? None, that I know of, but God overhead. He will not do it while hearts are as stones, Though He has pity for hearts that have bled. Who will bring father from darkness to light? Change the poor body from sickness to health? Save his good name from a terrible blight? Save our poor earnings from wasting and stealth? Money—we had it, a little laid by; but it was wasted by dealers in rum; Now we are pinched, and starvation is nigh; Robbers! O, help us! The robbers have come! Mother is drooping; the pain and the cough Threaten her voice in the home-nest to hush. Thousands of people, how can you stand off, And leave the rum-seller our mother to crush? People, O people, who give us the laws, Dry up the fountains of woe and despair; Shut up the den of the dragon who draws Fathers like ours to die in his lair. —Young Folks' News. THE DOOR SCRAPER; OR, THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE. A young man was engaged to teach a school in a small village, saw that many of the children, and especially the boys, were very careless about their dress and habits. They played in the road, getting their feet muddy, until the bell rang, when they rushed into school, mud and all, making the room quite filthy. The teacher resolved to correct this want of neatness, and taking a piece of iron hoop, he fastened one end to the door-step, and the other to a stake driven in the ground. This made a very good scraper; and as soon as the children saw it, they scraped away vigorously, for it was a new thing to them. That day there was less dirt than usual in the room. The teacher next managed to get a mat, which he placed on the step, that the children might wipe their feet after scraping them. The scholars soon began to take pride in having the school room clean; and the teacher, being encouraged, had the floor nicely scrubbed. This made such a change in the look of the room, that the children scarcely knew it when next they entered. Among the scholars was a little boy of the name of Freddy. His parents were poor and had a large family, and were not very cleanly around their houses. When the teacher put a scraper at the school-house Freddy thought it would be a good idea for them at home. Finding an iron hoop on his way from school one day, he picked it up, and that afternoon his door step had a scraper. When his father came home he saw the scraper, and cleaned his boots before entering the door. Freddy next obtained the skin of a sheep which had been killed by a dog. Of this he made a door mat, so there was no longer

any excuse for dirty feet or dirty floors in that house. The first step in the road to neatness prepared the way for others. Freddy's father got some lime and whitewashed the wall, and his mother gave the floor a good scrubbing. With a clean floor and a white wall, the old tin pans and cooking vessels looked dinky and black; so in a few days they were cleaned up, and appeared almost as good as new. The next step was to procure a cupboard to put them in; which was done by getting a neighbor, who was a carpenter, to make it, while Freddy's father cleaned the carpenter's garden. Then the mother thought the floor would look better if it were painted; for they were too poor to buy a carpet. Freddy went at once to a carriage painter not far off, to ask how much the paint would cost. This man, who knew the little boy, got from him the old story of the scraper and its results, and told him he would give him the paint if he would make him a scraper just like his own. "Thank you, sir," said Freddy, "mother can take the money and buy the Bible now." "What Bible?" inquired the man. "A Bible for me to read, night and morning, just like the school-master. I shall be so glad when I get it." "Why," said the painter, "your mother need not buy a Bible. I have some Bibles to give away, and you may take one home with you if you want." Freddy was when he went home with his paint-pots in his basket, and his Bible under his arm! The floor was painted, and the Bible was read and its lessons practised; and the family who commenced by having clean feet, were not satisfied until, through the grace promised in the Bible, they obtained clean hearts.—Early Days. WHAT AN OLD MAN NOTICED. I have noticed that all men are honest when well watched. I have noticed that purses will hold pennies as well as pounds. I have noticed that in order to be a reasonable creature, it is necessary to at times be down-right mad. I have noticed that some men are so honest that necessity compels them to be dishonest in the end. I have noticed that silks, broadcloths and jewels are often bought with other people's money. I have noticed that whatever is, is right with a few exceptions—the left eye, the left leg, and the left side of a plum pudding. I have noticed that the prayer of the selfish man is, "Forgive us our debts," while he makes everybody who owes him pay to the utmost farthing. I have noticed that he who thinks every man a rogue is very certain to see one when he shaves himself, and he ought, in mercy to his neighbor, to surrender the razor to justice. I have noticed that money is the fool's wisdom, the knave's reputation, the poor man's desire, the covetous man's ambition, and the idol of all. I have noticed that all men speak well of all men's virtues when they are dead, and that tombstones are marked with the epitaphs of the good and virtuous. Is there any particular cemetery where the bad are buried. JUSTICE TO THE SUBJECT. Not long ago I met a clergyman in whom I was interested, a worthy man, who somehow did not seem to "get on." Nobody had any thing against him, but nobody wanted to hear him preach. He was sound, solid, pious, and all that, but— Venturing on the privilege which belongs to a friend, I said to him, "My dear brother, I hear only one fault found with you. People say that you preach very long—that you make nothing of preaching for an hour, or an hour and a quarter." He answered, "Well, when I take up a subject I like to discuss it fully. I like to do justice to a subject, even if I have to go rather beyond the ordinary limits." "Gracious, grandmother!" I exclaimed; "justice to the subject!" And is no justice or no mercy to be shown to the audience? Is the sermon the means or the end? Did God Almighty send you into the world to discuss subjects or to convert souls? If you are to live for the subject, if the subject is to feed and clothe you, and support you and support your children, and if the subject is to recompense you at the day of judgment, why, I have nothing further to offer. But if it is souls that you are to live for, then look out for the souls, and let the subject take care of itself.

Hygienic. SLEEPING ROOMS. By Lewis W. Leeds, New York. That old-fashioned dread of night air is so rapidly disappearing that it will soon be referred to as one of the singular prejudices of a by-gone age. But there still lingers in the minds of many persons that you must not sleep in a draught. They think it is good to have fresh air, but it must not blow directly upon them. Now, I have not the slightest doubt that if every individual in the city of New York were to sleep on the house-top instead of in their stifling rooms, the rate of mortality would be reduced twenty-five per cent. in three months; and if they could have blankets enough to keep warm, and merely screened from the rain at night, without obstructing the currents of air,—or, in other words, to sleep directly in all the draughts they could get,—the mortality would be reduced one half in one year. Consumption, that purely foul air disease, would rapidly disappear from amongst us; and infantile deaths would be as rare as they are in the log cabin districts of Virginia and Kentucky, where the family consists generally of man and wife and from ten to fifteen children, and where puerperal fever is unknown. Now, it is warmth alone that determines whether a room is comfortable or not. The poor woman, with her thin poor blood, who has but a tattered quilt to cover herself and her half-starved infant on a cold winter night, cannot afford to sleep with open windows. But this plea of economy does not apply to many thousands of wealthy citizens who habitually put their children—if they can succeed in keeping them alive beyond their babyhood—in close, shut-up rooms, that are disgustingly foul to any one accustomed to sleep in pure, well-aired rooms. Where the body is kept warm, and pure air only inhaled, there is not one particle more danger of taking cold in sleeping directly between two open windows all the year round, than there is in taking cold in riding in an open sleigh when thoroughly warmed by wrappings of furs and robes, and such a thing as taking cold under such conditions never occurs, providing always the thorough warming of the feet and back, which are often neglected. It is generally much more difficult to avoid taking cold in the daytime than when in bed. For instance, if you eat a hurried breakfast and walk a square or two with sufficient energy to start the perspiration, and then with damp feet and moist skin enter a crowded foul omnibus or car, and sit with your back towards a cold window until you become chilled, a cold is the usual result, even to the most robust constitution. Liability to take cold also exists in almost every store or office, and in our ordinary railroad-travelling in the winter season, on account of the cold floors, causing cold feet, and exposure to sudden changes of temperature operating on small portions of the body. Every active business man is liable, therefore to go home at night with an incipient cold. And it depends upon his sleeping room, which is under his own control, whether he is cured of that cold before morning, or whether it is aggravated and added to; and as on until he becomes one of that great and popular crowd of foul air victims—consumptives, who form such excellent customers for quack medicine men. A bedroom, to be pure and wholesome, should be open all day to the purifying and disinfecting rays of the sun. The bed should never be made up in the morning, but should be kept in the sun and air all day, and each blanket should be hung up separately so as to be thoroughly purified and disinfected. And, if it can possibly be avoided, a bedroom should never be used for a sitting room. The difference between inhaling cold air and warm air is but little understood; most persons who have noticed that cold is more invigorating, attribute this difference to the fact that cold air being more dense, a greater amount of oxygen is inhaled in the same bulk of cold air. But this does not account for all the difference, as the blood circulates much faster when one is breathing air near zero than it does when breathing air near the temperature of the blood; but the difference in density due to that difference of temperature would be but one-fifth. There must, therefore, be some other cause for the stimulating effect of cold air. Many persons suppose that warm air, if pure, is just as invigo-