

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, September 6th, 1874.

Martyrdom of John the Baptist.—Mark vi. 20-29.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 26-28.

SUMMARY.—When men have done their work, the Lord permits them to depart; but holds those who take their life for future judgment.

EXPOSITION.—Introduction.—Between this and the preceding lesson Mark relates the second rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, and his third circuit of Galilee.

Verse 20.—For Herod feared John. This gives the reason why Herodias did not put John to death, vs. 19.

Knowing. John's character was not a matter of supposition, but of knowledge with Herod.

A just man and holy man; just, righteous, in his relations toward men; and holy, pious, devoted toward God.

Observed him, watched him closely, kept him in mind, observing his exemplary life. The word may mean kept him, preserved him from the designs of Herodias.

Heard him, or having heard him, etc. He did more than merely notice closely his actions and words; did many things which he advised, and he even heard him gladly, with relish, with pleasure.

Josephus (Ant. xviii. 5, 2), probably aware of no other ground of John's imprisonment and execution, gives only political reasons.

Herod, who fearing lest the great influence John had over the people, might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause.

Verse 21.—A convenient day having come for Herodias to carry out her wily and malicious design. On his birthday. So Pharaoh celebrated his birthday with great pomp and festivity.

woman; and that she had by her first marriage a daughter, named Salome.

Verse 21.—A convenient day having come for Herodias to carry out her wily and malicious design.

On his birthday. So Pharaoh celebrated his birthday with great pomp and festivity.

Made a supper or banquet feast. The supper was the chief meal of the day, taken toward or at evening, and often prolonged into the night.

Lords, high Captains, literally, commanders of a thousand.

The first men of Galilee; the chief men of the land generally. The Jews were accustomed to take journeys in attending their feasts.

Verse 22.—Daughter of Herodias, whose name, according to Josephus, was Salome, a daughter by Philip, Herod's brother. She was afterward married to her Uncle Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea (Luke iii. 1), and then to her cousin Aristobolus.

Having come in, possibly unexpected even to Herod, but contrived beforehand by the crafty Herodias.

Danced. The sexes did not mingle in the ancient dance. It was a sacrifice of decency and maidenly decorum; but Herod, and those with him, quite likely more or less intoxicated, were pleased, doubtless, with the skill and grace of her performance.

Them that sat with him, according to the custom of the time.

Verse 23.—Unto the half of my kingdom. The case of Herod is only one of many examples of Eastern monarchs lavishing gifts on favorite dancers.

Verse 24.—There seems to have been no secret understanding between the mother and daughter. The latter therefore going out into the apartment of the women, which was separate of that of the men, consulted with her mother, Herodias, however, like one who was carrying out a preconceived plan, had a ready answer to her daughter's question.

The head, etc. Not the death only, for that would not have been strictly a gift, but the head, which could not be given her without his death.

Verse 25.—How willing and even eager the daughter was to adopt her mother's advice is seen by the fact that she came in to the king straightway with haste, and by the boldness and urgency of her request.

I will, &c., by and by in a charger, immediately on a platter. The Greek word originally meant a board, a plate, dish or platter of any kind.

John the Baptist, a person well known. The evangelists, without any explanation, thus speak of him, Matt. iii. 1; xi. 11; xiv. 2; xvi. 14; xvii. 13; Mark viii. 28; Luke vii. 20, 33; ix. 19.

Verse 26.—The unexpected request of Salome produces a sudden change of feeling of Herod. He knows it is wrong; he is concerned for his own popularity among the people; he fears lest the people, who regard John as a prophet, may cause him trouble.

Duelists and gamblers act upon a similar principle. Herod had doubtless some scruples of conscience in regard to his oath, and one uttered so publicly. He did not wish to be a perjurer, much less to be regarded as one.

Verse 27.—Immediately. No sooner does Herod decide upon the wicked and bloody act than he orders the execution. One of the guard. One of his body-guard, who acted, as they often do now in

the East, as executioners of capital sentences.

Beheaded him in the prison. The narrative seems to imply that the prison was near at hand, and the execution performed at once; it would have taken a least two days for the execution of the sentence.

He had now been in prison about seven months, and it was now about three years from the commencement of his ministry. For the Passover was at hand (John vi. 4), the third of our Saviour's ministry, which began that year on April 17th, when the report of John's death was brought to Jesus.

Verse 29.—Brought his head, etc. The request was strictly carried out in every particular. The head was brought and given to this heartless dancing-maid, and by her to her mother, who was the principal actor and guiltiest party in this terrible tragedy. See ver. 22.

Verse 29.—His disciples. John's Matt. (xiv. 12) relates that after the burial they went and told Jesus, showing their tender feelings toward John, and their confidence in Jesus as a friend to their master, and as one who would sympathize with them.

Came and took up his corpse. Where it had been cast after his execution. Into one of the deep ravines beneath the fortress the headless body of John (Mark vi. 29) may have been cast, which his disciples took up and buried, and then went and told Jesus.

A tomb. The sepulchres of the Jews were often caverns, or vaults dug sometimes beneath the surface of the ground, but more commonly in the sides of hills, and out in the solid rocks.

Abridged from The Mighty Worker.

SUNDAY, September 13th, 1874.—The Five Thousand Fed.—Mark vi. 34-44.

Youths' Department.

For the Christian Messenger.

A CHILD'S DESIRE.

I would come to Jesus In my early youth, Trusting in His mercy, Resting on His truth, Jesus, loving Saviour, Hear my humble plea; Let me share Thy favour, Let me live to Thee.

I would follow Jesus Closely every day; I would call Him "Master," And His word obey. Every task assigned me I would faithfully fulfil; Teach me, dear Redeemer, How to do Thy will.

I would live like Jesus, Free from every sin, May His Holy Spirit Make me pure within. I would toil for Jesus, Strengthened by His grace, Till in endless glory I behold His face.

I would tell to Jesus Every grief and care; He delights to answer Humble, fervent prayer. Through the angelical future, Jesus, be my Guide; In Thy great compassion, Keep me near Thy side.

I would trust in Jesus All my journey through; He is ever faithful, He is ever true. Saviour, in my bosom, Shed abroad Thy love; When I die receive me To Thy home above.

March, 1874. J. CLARK.

THE TWO MOTHERS.

A beautiful babe lay in his coffin. Death had come suddenly, and given no opportunity for disease to emaciate that little form. The face was full and fair, with a dimple in the chin, and a smile playing on the lips.

Precious words of Scripture were read, a few comforting thoughts spoken, an earnest prayer offered. And then a slight rustling noise is heard. The mother arises and walks to the coffin. She makes no audible sound, and sheds not a tear. Alas! She is blind. Yet she would see her child before he is carried forever from her. How often has she folded him fondly to her

bosom, and kissed his sweet lips! But she has never seen him. What would she give if she could have just one glimpse of her darling, that she might in the sad years to come to able to remember him! Back from her face she flings her veil, and bends over the beloved dead. But the sightless orbs cannot see him. And so she takes her fingers, which are eyes for the blind, those fingers which had so often and lovingly performed kind offices for her little one, and gently she moves them about all over that face and form.

We weep in hearty sympathy as we behold that sightless woman leave her dead child. But shall I tell you of a spectacle more sad than this?

Another form lies in a coffin. It is that of a man full forty years of age, who has killed himself with strong drink. By his brutal conduct he long since estranged from him his loving wife and children. His habits have been so gross that his dearest friends could not live with him, or permit him to live with them. For years his life has literally been that of a vagabond.

A wretched funeral was that of the drunkard and suicide. A few friends gather. A few words are spoken. A prayer is offered. And then an aged one totters up to the head of the coffin. It is the mother. She is not blind. Ah! no, it would be a mercy just now if she was. She looks at that disfigured and brutalized face, and tries to distinguish the features of her once innocent and beautiful boy.

O ye, ye who have committed to your care the little ones, whether they are now in their infancy or early childhood, not only rejoice that you can see them, and that they are still spared to you; but be sure you consecrate them fully to God, and train them thoroughly for His service.

GOOD ADVICE TO CHRISTIANS.

- 1. See that your religion makes you a better son or daughter, a better clerk, a better student, a better friend, a better workman. 2. Do not set yourself up as a standard. Shun all censoriousness. Remember that each one "to his own Master standeth or falleth," and not to you. 3. Let nothing keep you away from the Saviour. Never be tempted to stay away from him by unbelieving doubts, by past neglect, or present fear, by anything. Be more intimate with him than with any earthly friend. 4. Never rejoice in your own strength. A child looking up to Christ is stronger than a strong man armed. Be resolute in looking to him alone for strength.

Show by your life what grace can do. There is no language in the world so eloquent as a holy life. Men may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do.

Finally. Do not be discouraged if you fail in everything. If you were perfect, what need would you have of a Saviour?

THE SAW OF CONTENTION.

"O, Frank, come and see how hot my saw gets when I rub it. When I draw it through the board awhile, it's almost hot enough to set fire to it."

"That's the friction," said Frank, with all the superior wisdom of two years more than Eddie boasted.

"Yes," said sister Mary, who was passing, "it's the friction; but do you know what it makes me think of?"

"No, what?" asked both the boys at once.

"Of two little boys who were quarrelling over a trifle this morning, and the more they talked the hotter their tempers grew, until there was no knowing what might have happened, if mother had not thrown cold water on the fire by sending them into separate rooms."

The boys hung their heads, and Mary went on.

When the flames seized the great house of worship belonging to the First Baptist Church, in Chicago, brethren who had labored hard to save it, said one to another: "Our house must go, but let us have one more prayer within its walls." And they bowed before God in face of the coming flames, while one who had been wont to lead in the fire and thunder of battle led the cry of these faithful heroes before the mercy seat. Then, rising to their feet, they sang as they retreated:

From every stormy wind that blows, From every swelling tide of woes, There is a calm, a sure retreat— 'Tis found beneath the mercy seat."

AUSTRALIAN LADIES AT CRICKET.

A cricket match of a novel description has been played at Sandhurst, with the object of swelling the funds of the local charities. The players were ladies, who went into regular practice for the match, and a local journal said, in noticing their proceedings, "the progress which they made was astonishing, for they picked up the points of the game with wonderful aptitude." A description of the match says of the lay cricketers: At first it was expected that they should play in the Bloomer costume, as being less likely to interfere with their freedom of movement than any other, but the innovation was considered too startling for a British community, and the idea was given up in favour of an attire of the ordinary shaped dress, made of calico, with a coloured jacket to distinguish the respective sides.

These dresses the ladies purpose handing over as gifts to the charities. Everything being in readiness, the ladies—the one side wearing red Garibaldi jackets and sailors' hats, and the other blue jackets and sailor hats—marched in pairs—red and blue being linked together—from the tent into the field, headed by the respective captains—Mrs. Rae, for the Reds, and Miss B. Rae for the Blues. Their appearance was very pretty and picturesque, and they were loudly applauded by the on-lookers. The Blues secured a total of 62 runs before the last wicket fell. After the lapse of half an hour the Reds took the field, and they put their opponents out for 83 runs. One innings each only was played, and victory, therefore, rested with the Blues. When the ladies had assembled in the booth, Mr. Abbott, chairman of the Hospital Committee, thanked the ladies for the successful effort which they had made on behalf of the charities. Mr. Rae, on behalf of the ladies, replied, stating that the ladies had thoroughly enjoyed the game, and had the utmost gratification in knowing that their efforts had been productive of a substantial addition to the funds of the charities.

Recently an officer of the London School Board was crossing Covent Garden market at a late hour, when he found a little fellow making his bed for the night in a fruit-basket. "Would you not like to go to school and be well cared for?" said the official. "No," said the urchin. "But do you know I am one of the people who are authorized to take up little boys whom I find as I find you, and take them to school?" "I know you are, old chap, if you find them in the streets, but this here is not a street, it is private property, and if you interfere with my liberty, the Duke of Bedford will be down upon you. I know the haet as well as you."