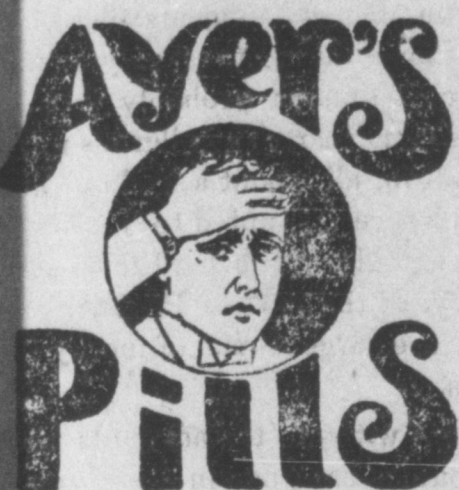


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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Quarter First. Lesson 4, Jan 27, 1901

CHRIST SILENCES THE PHARISEES.—Matthew 24: 34-46.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*What think ye of Christ?—Matt. 22: 42.*

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Tuesday, April 4, A. D. 30. The same day as our last lesson. Three days before the crucifixion. Place.—The temple in Jerusalem. Jesus.—A little over 33 years old.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHALLENGED. Mat. 21: 23-27; Mark 11: 27-33; Luke 20: 1-8. When Jesus entered the temple Tuesday morning, after the triumphal entry, and the cleansing of the temple, the leaders confronted him and demanded his authority.

Jesus answered by asking them a question, "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or from men?" They refused to answer, for if they said "From heaven," then they recognized his authority as from heaven, for John the prophet had pointed him out as the Messiah. There was nothing they could consistently do but accept him. On the other hand they did not dare to say that John was an impostor and not a prophet of God, because that would set the great mass of the people against them and undermine their authority.

They refused to answer. Therefore Jesus refused to answer them.

THE ORDEAL OF THREE SUBTLE AND ENTANGLING QUESTIONS.—Matt. 22: 15-40; Mark 12: 13-34; Luke 20: 20-40.

First, the question by the Pharisees and Herodians, concerning taxes.

Second, the question by the Sadducees, concerning the resurrection.

Third, the question by a scribe, concerning the commandments.

Jesus did not seek controversy, but when it was thrust upon him he used it as a means of bringing out clearly great truths.

Controversy may have its value, provided always that we use it to purify and perfect our views of truth, whatever our opponents may say or do.

Opposition of enemies, the most bitter, hateful, malicious, may be used like the thin filament in the electric lamp by which the hitherto unseen current is made to give forth a dazzling light. So it has ever been with the great attacks upon the Bible and the doctrines of the gospel. Every attack has been the occasion of purer truth and stronger light.

The Pharisees united with the Herodians, partisans of Herod not of Jewish descent, antagonistic to the Pharisees, and catering to the Roman authorities. They conspired together to ensnare Jesus by coming to him in a most flattering way with a question about taxes. "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?"

They expected an answer of yes or no. If he said it was not right to pay taxes, he would be in collision with the whole Roman power, and they would regard and treat him as a criminal. His career would be ended. If he said it was lawful for the Jews, the great mass of the people would be against him, and he would lose his hold upon them.

By means of a denarius, a silver shilling coin with the emperor's head stamped upon it. Fulfill your obligations to the State, since your very coins show that you have such obligations; do your duty in this sphere. But God's image is stamped on your souls. You belong to God. You have duties of love and trust and obedience to him. Fulfill those duties as faithfully as you should those to an earthly ruler. Bring your whole life under the sway of conscience and righteousness.

"It was an answer not only most truthful, but of marvelous beauty and depth. It elevated the controversy into quite another sphere, where there was no conflict between what was due to God and to man,—indeed, no conflict at all, but divine harmony and peace."

Next came the Sadducees, the agnostics and materialists of the day, who did not believe in the immortal life, or spiritual beings, or in such a thing as the resurrection (v. 23; Acts 23: 8). If there was no resurrection then Jesus teaching was false. His promise that he should rise again must fail, and with it his claim to be the Messiah and the Son of God; his promised kingdom, all the rewards he had promised to his disciples. His whole life would be a failure.

When the Pharisees... heard... they were gathered together, discussing their defeat and the wise answers Jesus had given. They were puzzled as to what to do next,

and trying to find some new device. Put the Sadducees to silence. Literally, "muzzed the Sadducees." Then one of them, A Pharisee, who had listened to the discussion of Jesus (Mark 12: 28) A lawyer. A scribe, one of the men learned in the Jewish law, who copied, preserved, interpreted, and taught the Jewish Scriptures. Asked him a question. Probably one frequently discussed, and on which diverse opinions were held. Tempting him. Not maliciously, "but in the sense of testing on another question the wisdom of one who answered a previous question so admirably.

Which is the great commandment in the law? Which is the great commandment, the one that stands first in importance? Is it a ceremonial, or moral precept? Is it a duty to God, or to man? This was a question which, with some others, divided the Jewish teacher into rival schools and was a constant bone of contention.

Jesus said unto him, quoting, with the addition reported by Mark, from Deut. 6: 4, 5, the very words which "every devout Jew recited twice every day, and the Jews do it to this day" and which they inscribed on the parchment enclosed in their phylacteries, and wore on their foreheads and arms during prayer. It was called the Shema (Hebrew for Hear, the first word of the quotation). "To say the Shema was a passport into Paradise for any child of Abraham." Thus Jesus' answer from their own Bible, in words they regarded as supremely sacred, led him out safely from the snares the Pharisees had set for him. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God Love is an all inclusive affection, embracing not only every other affection proper to its object, but all that is proper to be done to its object; for as love spontaneously seeks to please its object, so, in the case of men to God, it is the native welispring of a voluntary obedience. With, or from, all thy heart, the general word for the inner man. It is the seat of the desires, passions, affections, emotions. With all thy soul. The life-principle, the centre of will and personality. With all thy mind. It is to be an intelligent love, from free choice under the direction of the reason and the judgment. Mark adds from Deuteronomy, with all thy might, "representing the outgoing and energies of all the powers."

This is the first and great commandment. It is the sum of the first table of the law.

The second is like unto it. Because it is like the first, an embodiment of love; it is the sum of the second table of the law; it is almost a twin commandment with it, for love to God will certainly manifest itself in love to man, his child and our brother. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the measure of love to our neighbor.

The heart of love is a fountain of living waters, and the commandments are the channels through which the streams flow out. The commandments are the fences by the roadside which show love the way in which it should go.

JESUS BRINGS OUT ANOTHER TRUTH BY A QUESTION.—V. 41-46. The Pharisees were gathered together, to consult what course to take next, as in v. 34. Jesus asked them (a question).

What think ye of Christ? Have you really thought thoroughly about your Messiah? Have you done all you could to know what he ought to be, in what way he should come, what kind of a king he was to be? Note this is the great question for every person. On the answer to it depends what Christ is to him, and his power in the church. "A small Christ, a feeble church." "The greater the Christ, the mightier the church to save the world."

Whose son is he? Their only answer must be that he was to be the son of David, that is, the descendant of David; in Mark and Luke our Lord refers to the fact that the scribes so taught. This was the truth, but not the whole truth.

How then doth David in spirit. Mark says, "By the Holy Ghost," by the inspiration of God. Call him Lord, quoting from Psa. 110: 1. "This psalm is oftener quoted in the New Testament as Messianic than in any other portion of the Old Testament."

The Lord (Jehovah) in the Hebrew said unto my Lord, "to my sovereign Lord, the Messiah, the son of David." Sit thou on my right hand, as my co-regent. This verse is quoted in 1 Cor. 15: 25; Heb. 1: 13; 10: 12, 13, as applying to the Messiah, as was the universal Jewish opinion. "In later Jewish writings nearly every verse of it is quoted as referring to the Messiah."

If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? There was only one answer: that in his human nature he was David's son, but as the Son of God he was his Lord. The Messiah was both. No man was able to answer him a word, because they did not take the whole Scriptures, and learn all they said about the Messiah. They were convicted

of ignorance. Ask him any more questions. This method of attack was given up as a failure.

The Jews resisted every argument and refused to accept their Messiah, and thus save themselves and their nation.

The Baby's Nurse.

Yes, said Mr. Hillier, as he carefully dug around my pansy bed, oh, yes I've seen elephants in India many a time. I was stationed at one point with an English army, you know, where I saw one who used to take care of the children.

Take care of the children! How could it be? What do you mean? Well, he did, ma'am. It was wonderful what that elephant knew. The first time I made his acquaintance gave me a blow that I had reason to remember. I was on duty in the yard, and the Colonel's little child was playing about, and she kept running to near, I thought, to the elephant's feet. I was afraid he would put his great clumsy foot on her by mistake, so I made up my mind to carry her to a safer place. I stooped to pick her up, and the next thing I knew I had had a knock which sent me flat on the ground. That elephant had hit me with his trunk. One of the servants came along just then and helped me up, and when I told him about it, said he, I wonder the old fellow didn't kill you. It isn't safe for anybody to interfere with that baby when he has it in his charge, I have you to know that he is that baby's nurse.

Well, I thought he was just saying it for sport, but, sure enough, after a while the nurse came out with the child fast asleep in his arms, and what did she do but lay it in the elephant's trunk as though it had been a cradle. And the great fellow stood there for more than an hour watching that baby and rocking it gently now and then!

He was real good to the other children, too. It used to be his business to take the family out riding. The Colonel's lady would come out and mount her cushioned seat on his back, and then one by one the three children would be given to the elephant and he would hand them up to the mother nicer than any nurse or servant could, you know, because he could reach, and knew how to do it. Oh, an elephant is an uncommonly handy nurse when he is trained to the business, and faithful, I tell you. You can trust him every time.—Pausy.

Bishop of Oxford's Riddle.

The following physical puns, called the Bishop of Oxford's Riddle, have furnished much entertainment:

1. I have a trunk.
2. It has two lids.
3. And two caps.
4. Two musical instruments.
5. Two established measures.
6. A great number of articles carpenters can't do without.
7. I have always about me two good fish.
8. A great number of small shell-fish.
9. Two lovely tree.
10. Some fine flowers.
11. Two playful domestic animals.
12. A great number of small wild animals.
13. A fine stag.
14. A number of whips without handles.
15. Some weapons of warfare.
16. A number of weathercocks.
17. An entrance to a hotel.
18. At a political meeting on the verge of a division.
19. Two students.
20. A number of Spanish grandees.
21. A big wooden box.
22. Two fine buildings.
23. Product of camphor tree.
24. A piece of English money.
25. An article used by artists.
26. Boat used in racing.
27. Used in crossing river.
28. Pair of blades without handles.
29. Twelfth letter of the alphabet finished with bows.

His Only Vice.

I was riding in a street car in Chicago one day, when I noticed a little fellow sitting beside me who had a great bunch on the side of his face. Pretty soon he expectorated upon the floor, and I found out what was the matter with his face—he was chewing tobacco. He was a bright-looking little fellow, and I said to him, Sonny, this looks pretty sad, for you to chew tobacco. Don't you know that tobacco is poison? No, he said. Don't you think it will injure you? No. But, I urged, it will certainly harm you. Well, he said, it is the only vice I have; I don't smoke, and I don't swear—I only chew. Why don't you smoke? I asked. Because if I should smoke, I would get the nicotine in my lungs; I just chew, and then I spit it all out. He had evidently been studying into the philosophy of the subject, and was trying to be a good boy. I expostulated with him, and asked what made him chew, and he said that if

the didn't chew, he felt bummy. This boy was already so far advanced in the narcotic habit that if he didn't chew he felt wretched.

That is the way with tea and coffee drinkers, also. Anything that makes a person feel bummy when he dispenses with it, is a sad thing for him, whether it is tea, coffee, or whatever it may be; it is a stimulant. A person does not feel wretched if he goes without bread, and takes in its place some other wholesome food, although he has been accustomed to eating bread; and so with apple sauce, or any other article of wholesome food.—Good Health.

The Quality of Illustration.

The child's mind has two gates—eye gate and ear gate—and more passes through the former than through the latter; hence the need of the objective in teaching. The blackboard is indispensable, but not for putting on the elaborate outlines and drawings. Little David needs his sling and pebbles. The simplest lines, words, and pictures, graving out of the crayon of the teacher as she stands at the board and talks, sits with class and slate or paper before her, is what the children relish and profit by. But do not be a slave to the board or map, picture or chart. Many lessons are best taught eye to eye, heart to heart, without objective illustration whatever. Think of Naaman Healed being taught to the little ones from little doll counterfeits of captain and prophet, arrayed as Solomon was not in all his glory. Remember that the Bible is its own best interpreter and illustrator, and do not follow the example of those teachers who ransack libraries in order to secure striking illustrations for the day's lesson, or devour books on Blackboard Illustration to find something to catch the attention. The finest primary teacher in the land has largely won her reputation by getting her illustrations from two sources our Lord exclusively used—the Bible and simple things of every day life.—Prof. Hamill, in Central Christian Advocate.

A Touching Incident.

The still form of a little boy lay in a coffin surrounded by mourning friends. A mason came into the room and asked to look at the lovely face. You wonder that I care so much, he said, as the tears rolled down his cheeks; but your boy was a messenger of God to me. One time I was coming down by a long ladder from a very high roof and found your boy close behind me when I reached the ground. He looked up in my face with a childish wonder asked frankly, Weren't you afraid of falling when you were up so high? and before I had time to answer he said: Ah, I know why you were not afraid—you had said your prayers this morning before you went to work. I had not prayed, but I never forgot to pray from that day to this, and by God's blessing I never will.

THE ONLY ONE.—Miss Havergal

tells of going into a boarding school as a pupil, just after she had confessed Christ. She was startled to find that in a school family of a hundred she was the only Christian. Her first feeling was that she could not avow her love for Christ with all that company of worldly girls around her. But her second thought was that she could not but avow it, since she was the only one Christ had there to represent Him. This thought was most strengthening, and from that hour she quietly took her place as a friend of Christ.

We cannot gather too much of the Christian spirit—the spirit of forbearance and peace and sacrifice—the spirit of brotherhood and charity—the spirit of purity and devotion to Him through whom comes all that renders life noble and true.

Poverty has forced many a man out of obscurity up into prominence and usefulness. And yet how many people chafe and worry because they are poor!

Ability involves responsibility. Power, to its last particle, is duty.—Alexander McLaren, D. D.

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