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THE SANHEDRIM

INTERNATIONAL LESSON

First Quarter Lesson 5 Feb. 2 1902

THE FIRST PERSECUTION.—Acts 4: 1-31.

Study Verses 1-22. Read Acts 4: 1-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.—Acts 4: 12.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The same afternoon in June as the last lesson, and the following morning.

Place.—Solomon's porch; a prison; the hall of the Sanhedrim; a room in Jerusalem where the disciples met.

THE APOSTLES ARRESTED AND SENT TO PRISON.—Vs. 1-3. And as they (Peter and John) spake unto the people in Solomon's porch, a pillared portico open to the court of the temple. The lame man had been healed, and was standing by the apostles, while Peter, taking the miracle as his text, had been preaching Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour. Peter was interrupted in his speech. The priests, whose temple services had been interfered with by the withdrawal of the crowds into another part of the temple, attracted to the strange event and the new teachings. And the captain of the temple was the captain of the guard of Levites and other, whose business was to protect the temple, prevent disorder etc. He was under the direction of the priests. And the Sadducees. These were rather a party than a sect. They did not believe in the future life, or angels or spirits, or the resurrection, but their real bond of union was political. . . . they were supporters of the existing system in alliance with Roman authority, and monopolized public offices in the Sanhedrim, the priesthood, and the magistracy. They were the aristocratic priests occupying influential positions. Came upon them, while they were speaking to the people, and broke up the meeting. Being grieved, troubled, vexed all through. That they taught the people. Different parties had different reasons for their displeasure; but all because the growth of the new sect would interfere with their worldly interests. Their power, their wealth, their dues from the temple sacrifice, would be reduced. Preached, published abroad. Through Jesus, by the fact of Jesus' resurrection that there is a resurrection from the dead, and therefore, a future life, and a judgment to come. And they laid hands on them. Arrested them. Put them in hold, i. e., in prison. Unto the next day. Because it was too late to assemble the Sanhedrim. Eventide. Near six o'clock.

Suggestions. 1. That those interested in opposition to the truth are grieved at the success of the gospel is no reason why we should relax our efforts to spread its blessings. Liquor-sellers, gamblers, those who make money out of vice, those whose gains are by fraud, are always grieved at every effort to save men from them, but their grief should make a labor more earnestly.

2. The apostles now began to know the meaning of Christ's promised blessing to the persecuted. The first blast of a tempest had struck the infant church. It developed faith and courage and energy and devotion and love and joy in the apostles.

3. Whenever the gospel becomes so well known and so strong that it interferes with evil men and evil customs, then comes trouble. A sleeping or dead church awakens no opposition, but "the fires of persecution begin to kindle when the fires of the Spirit begin to burn."

BUT THE WORK WENT ON.—V. 4. Just as we have seen in modern missions, the attempts at opposition but increased the number of the disciples. Hovebit. In spite of the opposition and persecution, the deeds and teachings of the apostles had their due effect. And the number of the men was about five thousand the total of men converted reached that number.

OPPOSITION AIDED THE CAUSE BY GIVING THE GOSPEL A HEARING BEFORE THE RULERS.—Vs. 5-7. The priests, rulers, and leading men would not go to the places where the gospel was being presented. Rulers and elders and scribes, composed the Sanhedrim, the great Jewish court. And Annas the high priest, though deposed by Roman, and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, made high priest in his stead, Annas was a man of great influence.

Before these same two Jesus was tried. John, and Alexander. This kindred of the high priest. Probable members of the Sanhedrim. Were gathered together. In the hall of the Sanhedrim. And when they had sat them in the midst. The two apostles and the lame man (v. 14) The Sanhedrim sat in a semicircle, with the president in the center.

The Sanhedrim, when complete, consisted of seventy-one members. They asked by what power, or by what name. Power is force, name is authority. They wanted to convict Peter and John of sorcery, by having worked a miracle not in the name of God, but of a crucified malefactor.

PETER PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE SANHEDRIM.—Vs. 8-12. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost. Thus Peter was given courage to speak the truth, and guided to the choice of the right things to say, and the best way of saying them. Ye rulers. . . . and elders. Peter is respectful. If we this day be examined of (concerning) the good deed. They hated the good deed because of the inferences and results that grew out of it. By what means this man is made whole. It includes health for body and soul alike. Be it known. Peter speaks the truth without fear or favor. By (or in) the name of Jesus Christ (the Messiah) of Nazareth. Peter boldly speaks the hated word. Whom ye crucified. Peter arraigns his accusers. They are now the criminals on trial for murdering their Messiah. Whom God raised from the dead. Peter insists on the fact of the resurrection because that was the crowning proof that Jesus was the Messiah. Doth this man stand here. This shows that he was with the apostles. This is the stone which was set at naught of your burden. The reference is to Psalms 118: 22. You who were set to build up God's spiritual temple, the kingdom of heaven, have rejected and tried to destroy the very foundation stone. But in spite of your efforts, the rejected stone has become the head of the corner, but that which lies at the foundation of the edifice, in the angle where two of the walls come together, and which gives to the edifice its strength and support. Jesus is alive, and on him is being built the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 3: 9-15). Neither is there salvation in any other. Not only from disease of the body, as in the case of this lame man, but from sin, of which bodily disease was the type. Salvation, that which the Jewish nation were looking for. It was the preservation of the nation; but that was but a type of the spiritual salvation which was in Jesus Christ. There is none other name. Name here stands for Jesus Christ himself, and all there is in him of wisdom, power, love, divineness. Under heaven. In all the earth. Given among men. Made known among them, whereby (in which) we (all members of the human race) must be saved. There was no other power under heaven that could.

Why is Jesus the only name? 1. Because he has brought the good news from God of love and forgiveness.

2. Because he lived the heavenly life on earth, and only so far as we have the same life principle, and seek to live according to his example, can we be fitted for heaven.

3. All the elements of power that can save men from sin are found in Jesus Christ and him crucified,—the atonement for sin, the need of forgiveness, the way of forgiveness, every motive of love and fear and duty and hope that can move the soul to a better life.

4. The essential peculiarity of Christ's religion is that it is a system of redemption. Other religions try to tell us what we ought to be; Others express our needs; Christ satisfies them. Others show us heaven. Christ fits us for heaven and takes us there.

THE OUTCOME.—Vs. 13-31. The position of the disciples was unanswerable. Two facts silenced their opponents. 1. The effect of Jesus himself on the character of the disciples. These men were unlearned and ignorant (v. 13), i. e., without school training, and ungifted. And yet they had this marvelous power. The Sanhedrists recognized that this power came from Jesus. Jesus must have been a power, must still be, in order to produce such effects.

To be with Jesus is to live in communion with him, to have him in our thoughts to love him with all our hearts, to go to him for guidance, to make him one daily companion to be in sympathy with his plans and purposes etc. The likeness will show in our daily life and character; men will thus see it as the effect of our union with Christ; this will point them to the Saviour.

2 The other fact was the presence of the healed man himself (v. 14). This was an unanswerable fact. Facts are the most convincing argument. What Christianity has done is the unanswerable argument in its favor. In can save because it has saved.

The Acquittal.—Vs. 15-22. In view of these facts, and the other fact (v. 21) that all the people glorified God for that which was done, the Sanhedrim dismissed the prisoner with a command to cease preaching Jesus. This the two apostles stoutly refused to do.

The effect on the apostles.—Vs. 23-31. One of the most notable things in the history of the apostles is the spirit shown in the prayer of the disciples when the result of the trial was reported to them. They did not ask to be sheltered from persecution, but for boldness, for power to do good in the name of Jesus, nothing for self, everything for the cause. And the answer came in a fresh gift of the Holy Spirit, filling their hearts, and great additions to the church.

Stop Him.

Stop that boy! This is the expression we heard a short time ago from the lips of an excited man who was in hot pursuit of a lad. What the boy had been guilty of we do not know, but it was evident he would be punished severely in some way or other if overtaken. The thought came to us that there are many boys who are going in hot haste, pursued by some evil habit which will surely lead them to ruin. Look where you will, and you will see them with the avenger in full pursuit.

Stop that boy! Yes, stop him, not to kill him, but to save his life. Not to put him in prison, but to knock off the shackles that now already bind and make him a slave. It is really alarming when we read of the number of young men, many of them mere lads, who have been caught in the mania for gambling, and whose earnings, and money that is not their earnings, goes in that way. Stop that boy; he is on the wrong road—a road that ends only too often in State prisons. It is an easy and quick step from gambling to forgery. Better stop him now and save the anguish and heart-breakings of father and mother.

Stop that young man whose heart has been fascinated by the dance room, and who has gotten it into his head that the virtue to be desired above all others is gracefulness of action. Stop that boy with a cigar in his mouth, a swagger in his walk, impudence in his face, and a care-for-nothing look in his manner. Stop him! he is going too fast. Stop him before he too accustoms his nerves; before pride ruins his character; before the loafer masters the man; before ambition and youthful strength give way to low pursuits and crime. Father, mother, do you know the secret habits of your boys? If you knew the terrible speed with which some of them are going to ruin, you would make greater efforts to save them. You may be indifferent now, but some day you will stand on the shore with tearful eyes and see your boys carried out with the tide, and struggling with the waves. You will call, but in vain. Stop him now.—Union Gospel News.

If You Want to be Loved.

Don't contradict people, even if you're sure you are right. Don't be inquisitive about the affairs of even your most intimate friend.

Don't underrate anything because you don't possess it. Don't believe that everybody else in the world is happier than you.

Don't conclude that you have never had any opportunities in life.

We know what we are; we know not what we may be.—Sir Walter Scott.

A CHILD'S LOVE FOR MOTHER.—A small lad lay upon a sick bed, weary and hungry. The parish deaconess carried him some delicacies. Expressing gratitude to the deaconess, he said, I will not eat this Mamma will need it when she comes home so tired and hungry.

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A MEDICINE WHICH PROLONGS LIFE. "I have used Ripans Tablets for a number of years and would not be without them. I was troubled with indigestion and constipation, and have noticed since I have been using them that I am getting rid of these terrible bilious spells which confined me to bed on account of the distress. Oh how I have not had any. I had just got over a bad spell of bilious fever and was sitting on the step, when a neighbor came to me and remarked how bad I looked. I told him I had just got over my fever and that I was afraid to eat anything on account of indigestion. He said I had suffered since I was quite young. He advised me to take Ripans Tablets. I did I would try them, and from then I haven't been without them. I can eat anything, providing I finish with a Tablet instead of dinner. I feel very thankful that I have found something that will prolong my life."

GASTRIC TROUBLES. "I had suffered three years at least from gastric troubles. I could not sleep at night. My head ached and my feet would be cold as ice. My bowels were not regular and I would get such cramps from gases forming on my stomach that I would faint away. I was in such distress that I would have sooner died than live. About three months ago I was suffering and felt as if my body was tied up inwardly. My brother recommended Ripans Tablets to me. My husband obtained some for me from the nearest drug store and I would not now be without them. They relieved me of all the foul gases that formed in my stomach and they insure my bowels regularly for which I had been taking physics all the time. I have no more gases, my bowels move regularly. I have no more headaches and can sleep well; in fact, I feel as light as the air which I breathe, and that is saying a good deal for a woman who weighs 100 pounds. I am sorry that I did not commence using the Tablets a year ago, for they would have saved me a great deal of pain and suffering."

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