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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter—Lesson XI.—June 16.

JESUS CRUCIFIED.—Mark 15: 21-39.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*He humbled him-
self, and became obedient unto death,
even the death of the cross.*—Phil.
2: 8.

ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS.—
Vers. 21, 22. All the preparations
having been made, the sad proces-
sion moved out of the castle. In
advance was a soldier carrying a
white wooden board on which was
written the nature of the crime. Then
came four soldiers with ham-
mer and nails, guarding Jesus who
bore the cross on which he was to
suffer. Then came two robbers,
each bearing his cross and guarded
by four soldiers. They were follow-
ed by a multitude. *And they com-
pel.* The Roman officer had author-
ity to press into the service, either
horses or men. *One Simon a
Cyrenian.* He belonged to Cyrene,
in Africa, then a flourishing city be-
tween Alexandria and Carthage, on
the Mediterranean. *Who passed
by out of the country.* He may have
shown some sympathy with Jesus.
The father of Alexander and Rufus.
These must have been well known
in the church at the time the Gospel
was written. "Men of Cyrene"
were among the founders of the
church in Antioch where Paul spent
the first year of his active Christian
service. It is a reasonable con-
jecture that Rufus was one of these,
and that Paul's intimacy with him
and his mother dated from that
time. *To bear his cross.* Jesus
staggered under the weight of his
cross. Therefore the soldiers com-
pelled Simon to help Jesus. It
may have been that this connection
with Jesus' sufferings led him to be-
come a disciple. *And they bring
him unto the place Golgotha....the
place of a skull.* Golgotha is a
Hebrew word, meaning a skull. The
place was doubtless so named
because it was a small knoll in the
shape of a skull.

THE CRUCIFIXION.—Vers. 23-25.
And they gave him to drink: just
before he was nailed to the cross.
Wine mingled with myrrh: i. e.,
sour wine, such as the soldiers used,
was mingled with a powerful narcotic
drug, bitter, but offered as an
anesthetic, to stupefy and dull the
sense of pain. *But he received it
not.* He merely tasted it so as to
recognize the kindness of the act,
but he refused to drink enough to
have any effect. He deliberately
chose to have all his powers alert at
this last hour. Because he would
drink to the very dregs the cup of
suffering which God gave him; for
only thus could he make full atone-
ment for the sins of the world. It
was an act of sublime heroism and
courage. *And when they had cruci-
fied him.* The victim was laid up-
on a cross a little longer than his
body. His arms were stretched
along the cross-beam, and his hands
nailed through the palms with a
huge iron nail. Then the feet to-
gether or separately were nailed be-
low. The body was terribly wren-
ched when the cross was raised and
dropped into its place: the concus-
sion often dislocated the limbs. In-
flammation of the wounds speedily
set in; intolerable thirst and ever-
increasing pain resulted; the burn-
ing heat of the sun scorching the
veins, and the hot wind which dried
up the moisture of the body, made
each moment more terrible than be-
fore. To all the physical torture
we must in this case add the result
of these upon a soul sensitive and
capable of suffering beyond all hu-
man comparison; the effect of in-
gratitude, of loneliness, of taunts
from those who represented his own
chosen people; and above all, his
state of soul, as he consciously bore
the sins of men. Death by cruci-
fixion seems to include all that pain
and death can have of the horrible
and ghastly,—dizziness, cramp,
thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, pub-
licity of shame, long continuance of
torment, horror of anticipation,
mortification of untended wounds,
—all intensified just up to the point
at which they can be endured at all,
but all stopping just short of the
point which would give to the suffer-
er the relief of unconsciousness.
Such was the death to which Christ
was doomed. *And they (the four
soldiers) parted his garments:* divid-
ed them among themselves. *Cast-
ing lots:* to see what portion each
soldier should have. *And it was
the third hour.* Nine o'clock in the
morning.

THE SUPERScription.—Ver. 26.
*And the superscription of his accusa-
tion:* the white tablet nailed upon
the cross above the head of the
victim, to declare the crime for
which he was crucified. This title
was written in the three languages

then in common use, so that all
could read. In Greek, for the for-
eigners and visitors, Greek being
the learned language of all nations;
in Latin, for the Romans; in
Hebrew, for the Jews.

The King of the Jews. Thus in
the chief tongues of men was pro-
claimed in jest what became a living
truth,—that Jesus is king: the king
to whom all nations and peoples
should yield allegiance. And it
was through the crucifixion that
Jesus became king, and founded his
kingdom, and drew the hearts of
men to be his loyal subjects.

THE TWO ROBBERS.—Vers. 27,
28. *And with him (one on each
side), they crucify two thieves:*
robbers, banditti; probably im-
prisoned at the same time, and for
the same offence as Barabbas. *And
the Scripture was fulfilled (Isa.
53: 12).*

The Converted Robber. One of
these robbers, while hanging on the
cross, was converted and forgiven.
See the story in Luke 23: 39-43.
A dying Saviour had on one side of
him an enemy and unbeliever, and
on the other side a friend and be-
liever. Thus it is to-day in every
part of the globe where Christ is
preached.

THE MOCKING CROWDS AROUND
THE CROSS.—Vers. 29-32. *They
that passed by.* The people going in
and out of the city. *Railed on him,
wagging their heads:* using both
voice and gesture to express their
mockery. *Ah, thou that destroyest
the temple, etc.:* the charge which
was falsely brought against Jesus in
the trial, being a perversion of his
words. *Come down from the cross.*
How could you do so great a thing
as to destroy and rebuild the temple
in three days, if you cannot do the
little thing of saving yourself from
the cross? *He saved others; himself
he cannot save:* implying that his
saving others, his saving men from
sickness, his raising them from the
dead, his promises of forgiveness
and eternal life, were a cheat, a false
claim. *Let Christ, the King of
Israel, etc.* If Jesus were the
Messiah, the great King who should
overthrow all the enemies of the
Jews, surely he could deliver himself
from the Roman cross. *That we
may see and believe.* But they
would not have believed, but would
have found some other excuse for
not believing. Men who hate the
Gospel are always proposing some
test of its value, on which they
would give it their confidence; but
if that test were fairly met, they
would be all the more bitter in hos-
tility to it, because of its new
triumph. *And they that were cruci-
fied with him reviled him:* either
both did at first, and then one chang-
ed; or the expression is simply a
general one.

THE FRIENDLY WATCHERS BY THE
CROSS. There were others besides
this mocking crowd watching near
the cross. The three Marys were
there: Mary, the mother of Jesus;
Mary, the wife of Cleopas; and
Mary Magdalene; and his mother's
sister, probably Salome, the mother
of John; and many other women
from Galilee. John was there; and
the other disciples were probably
not far away.

DARKNESS COMES OVER THE SCENE
—Ver. 33. *And when the sixth
hour was come i. e., noon. There
was darkness over the whole land;*
the land of Judea. This was a
miraculous occurrence designed to
exhibit the amazement of nature
and of the God of nature at the
wickedness of the crucifixion. This
darkness was typical of the powers
of darkness which seemed to be pre-
vailing; of the great sufferings of
the atonement for sin; of the dark-
ness brooding over Jesus' heart; of
the dark hour of sin and depravity
that could crucify God's beloved
Son; of the darkness of sin over all
the earth which was to be dispelled
by the cross of Jesus, and his resur-
rection from the dead.

THE DEATH OF JESUS.—Vers. 34-
37. *And at the ninth hour.* Three
o'clock. *Jesus cried with a loud
voice.* Up to the last moment there
was no sign of weakness, no decay
of power or vitality. *My God, why
hast thou forsaken me?* Jesus, of
course, was not really forsaken; but
it seemed so to him for the time.
The emphasis is on *thou.* Some
help toward an understanding of
this cry may be derived from that
phase of Christian experience in
which, while the intellect still holds
fast to its belief in God, the heart
feels his presence no more, and
the soul is in darkness in spite of
its faith in God. That there
was an inward conflict in Christ's
soul is indicated by the twofold
nature of the cry: "My God" in-
dicates an unrelaxed hold on him;
"forsaken me" indicates a sense of
bereavement of the divine presence.
Jesus is represented in the New
Testament as subject to the whole
experience of spiritual conflict which

belongs to man. *Behold, he calleth
Elias.* Greek for Elijah. Perhaps
a misunderstanding, but quite as
likely an intended mockery. *And
one ran and filled a sponge full of
vinegar.* Saying, *Let alone.* I will
give him drink, and see if Elijah
will come. *And Jesus cried with a
loud voice:* the triumphant note of
a conqueror. What he said is re-
corded in John and Luke. *And
gave up the ghost:* his spirit. Be-
fore this time the darkness had clear-
ed away. The physical cause of his
death has been thought by many to
have been rupture of the heart.
The broken heart being the result of
mental distress, this theory draws
our thoughts away from the mere
bodily tortures which Christ endur-
ed to the mysterious woe that press-
ed upon him on account of imputed
sin.

SIGNS ACCOMPANYING JESUS'
DEATH.—Vers. 38, 39. *And the
vail of the temple was rent in twain.*
The great vail of the temple that
hung between the Holy Place and
the Holy of Holies, 40 cubits (60
feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of
the thickness of the palm of the
hand, and wrought in 72 squares,
which were joined together; and
these veils were so heavy that in
the exaggerated language of the
time it needed 300 priests to mani-
pulate each. The rending of the
vail typified that the veil that shut
out the vision of holiness from the
hearts of the people had been taken
away, and the way into the Holy
Place, the state of holiness, and the
place of holiness, was now opened.
At the same time, there was an
earthquake of such power as to rend
the rocks and open the tombs; show-
ing how nature sympathized with
the mighty struggle that was going
on. Certain graves were opened,
and after the resurrection of Christ
many bodies of saints that slept
came forth, as if to accompany the
victorious Christ, and prefigure the
resurrection of the dead and the
moral resurrection of the world.
And when the centurion: who had
charge of the Roman soldiers at the
crucifixion. *He said, Truly this
man was the Son of God.* The pre-
judices that had surrounded the
victim had begun to vanish from
the centurion's mind, and he caught
a glimpse of his true nature.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

We should bear the cross with
Christ.

The cross is a shame or a glory,
according to the spirit and motives
with which we bear it.

The deed transforms the place, as
Calvary, the place of execution, has
become the holiest place on earth,
the centre of the world's history and
the world's salvation.

One of the worst devils that can
enter any man is the *mocking devil.*
He that saves others must do it
at cost to himself.

How dark this world would be
without Christ, its Sun!

Hours of darkness bordering on
despair come to the best of men.
They should not be disheartened
thereby as if they were thus shown
to be forsaken of God.

The door to holiness and heaven
was opened by the death of Christ.

Christ crucified is the wisdom and
power of God for the salvation of
men. He is the only solution of the
question how God can be just and
true, and yet forgive all who repent
and believe.

The Atonement on the cross (L)
enabled God to offer forgiveness, and
yet to honor his law, so that men
would be even more careful to keep
the law than if they saw the wicked
punished. (2) It proves to us that
God is ready to forgive. (3) It
shows the evil of sin that demands
such a cost in order to be saved from
it. (4) It shows that we cannot
enter heaven unless we are cleansed
from sin. (5) It proves the love of
God to man. (6) It furnishes every
possible motive for turning from
sin, touching the heart with love,
showing our danger, teaching the
law of duty, which dies rather than
fail or neglect, giving us hope of for-
giveness and life. (7) It shows the
value of our souls, to be worth such
a price. (8) It shows the value of
salvation, and the worth of eternal
life in heaven. (9) All this will be
in vain, unless we repent and be-
lieve.



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orable E. Dewdney as Superintendent General of
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L. VANKOUGHNET,
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