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BIBLE LESSONS.

Fourth Quarter.

STUDIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Lesson V. November 2. Luke 22: 34-71.

JESUS ACCUSED.

GOLDEN TEXT.

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.—Isa. 53: 5.

EXPLANATORY.

I. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION BEFORE ANNAS.—54. Then took they Him (arrested Him, at Gethsemane) and brought Him into the high priest's hall, the office being for Caiaphas, who was then high priest. But they took Him first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18: 13). He had been high priest, and although deposed by the Romans, he was still the legitimate high priest according to the law of Moses, the office being for life (Num. 20: 28; 35: 25), and may have been so regarded by the Jews. He was still a man of vast influence.

II. THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION BEFORE CAIAPHAS. ANNAS very soon sends Jesus to Caiaphas the high priest (ver. 24), and he, while waiting for the council to assemble, asks Jesus some questions about His teaching and His disciples. Jesus replies that it was easy for him to find out all about these, for everything had been done in public. Whereupon, an officious officer who stood near, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand.

III. THE EXAMINATION BEFORE AN IRREGULAR MEETING OF THE SANHEDRIM. During this examination before Caiaphas the Sanhedrim were assembling. This gathering must have been irregular and illegal. It was before this assembly that Jesus was tried, and by means of false witnesses perverting what He had said; and by His own confession of the truth that He was the Messiah, He was condemned to death for blasphemy (see Lev. 24: 16; compare Deut. 18: 20). They could not, however, execute the sentence. For that He must be taken before the Roman court, where the charge was changed to that of treason against the Roman government, as the only one of which Pilate could take cognizance (23: 2).

IV. PETER DENIES HIS LORD.—Let us return a moment to the arrest of Jesus at Gethsemane, when all the disciples forsook him and fled. But Peter soon recovered in a measure from his fright, and with John (John 18: 15) followed afar off (ver. 54).

FOLLOWING CHRIST AFAR OFF is very dangerous: (1) it leads into temptation; (2) it leads away from the source of help and strength; (3) it brings the weakness of an evil conscience. Those follow Christ afar off (1) who follow from curiosity; (2) those who are far from Christ in spirit and sympathy; (3) those who do little for Him, the conversion of the world for which Christ died.

55. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the hall: the court, which was surrounded by the buildings. It was cold in the early morning.

THE SURROUNDINGS. To understand the position of Peter, we must remember that Oriental palaces are built around an open quadrangular court paved with flat flagging stones. Into this court is an arched opening through one side of the house, into the street. Sometimes there is a large room open in front to this court. In such a room Jesus had his first trial before the Sanhedrim. Peter and John were in the court near the fire, where they could see Jesus and watch the proceedings.

FIRST DENIAL. During the informal trial before Caiaphas, 56. But a certain maid, the portress who let them in (John 18: 17). Beheld him as he sat. Looked steadfastly at him, in the flickering light of the fire. This man was also, "Also," as well as John, a point preserved in all the accounts, although they themselves say nothing of the presence of John. With him, she had seen him with Jesus in their daily journeys around the city. The slightly varying accounts given by the different evangelists suggest "that different persons took part in the conversation, or that she kept up a bantering conversation of this kind to which he responded in different words, but to the same effect."

57. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. This was false-hood, and treason to his Master and friend.

Note. That Peter failed in his strong devotion to his Master, were his pride and boast. Here there seemed little danger of failure; and yet just there he did fail. Where we feel strong, we are liable to be unguarded, and we fail there for that very reason.

Immediately after this the cock crowed (Mark 14: 68). Not the regular cock-crowing which occurred an hour later, but enough to have put Peter on his guard had he not been so occupied with his fear, and the annoyance of the questioning, that the warning passed unnoticed, if not unheard. So do we often fail to notice God's warning to us.

SECOND DENIAL. 58. And after a little while. When he had gone into the porch (Matt.) to escape the light of the fire and the questioning. Another (masculine). A man, Matthew and Mark say "a maid." Doubtless both, with others, took part in the questioning, for John says "they." They are all of them. One of the followers of Jesus. He the most forward of the disciples, must have often been seen with Jesus. Man, I am not. The denial was accompanied with an oath (Matt.).

THIRD DENIAL. 59. And about the space of one hour after. This must have been near the close of the informal trial before the Sanhedrim. Peter had no doubt been anxiously watching the trial, and returned into the court within sight of the hall-where the trial was in progress. Another opinion affirms that this was a kinsman of Malchus, whom Peter had attacked in the garden (John 18: 26). He remembered seeing the striking face of his speech revealed (Mark); a very common way of identifying a person. The smallest differences of speech show one's nationality, or the part of the country from which one comes. Then Peter began to curse and to swear, trying to uphold a lie by profanity.

Note. This outburst of profanity was doubtless possible on account of habits of profanity in his youth before conversion, and which he had overcome as a disciple of Christ. It is hard to get wholly rid of early sins.

PETER'S BITTER TEARS OF REPENTANCE. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. Reminding him of his sin, since that was the dog Jesus had given to him. "The sound must have struck him like a death knell."

61. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. Jesus must have looked on His erring apostle either from the chamber in which He was being tried, if it was one of those chambers with open front (whence the courtyard could be seen); or else at the moment when the trial was over, and He was being led across the courtyard amid the coarse insults of the crowd. Both are possible, and would have been one of awful pathos to the unhappy apostle. In that look "were mingled sorrow, admonition, yearning love, beseeching appeal." And Peter remembered.

In his excitement and terror he had forgotten all about the warning Jesus had given. What a terrible thing memory is! Or rather it is a terrible thing to do things the memory of which is like coals of unquenchable fire. But it is well to remember before it is too late Jesus' eye is upon us. He knows all that we do. And His look should bring us to repentance.

62. And Peter went out of the palace into the night. And wept bitterly. He had denied his best friend, he had joined the enemies of his Master, he had renounced the truth, he had rejected the kingdom of God, he had shown cow-ardice, he had lied and sworn. Peter saw all this in contrast with the noble conduct of his Teacher. Like Job he "abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes."

(1) The depth and intensity of his repentance. (2) Contrast it with the false repentance of Judas. Judas was sorry rather for the consequences of his sin, than for the guilt of it. And instead of living to remedy all the possible results of his crime, he hung himself. Still of himself he was thinking, not of the cause.

V. MOCKERY OF JESUS BY THE OFFICERS AND OTHERS. When the preliminary examination was through, and the informal meeting had adjourned, there was a period of waiting for at least two hours before the death of Jesus. The Sanhedrim could take place at sunrise.

63. And the men that held Jesus, who were His guard, and should have sheltered him from insult and injury. Both Matthew and Mark imply that members of the Sanhedrim participated in this cruelty. Mocked Him. Made sport of Him. His present circumstances as a condemned criminal, in contrast with His claims to be the Messiah, a king, a prophet, the Son of God, awakened many a jest in these rude, unseeing men. Any man so treated, would be regarded as a mockery of God and of His goodness and love. But Jesus kept silence. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again." (1 Pet. 2: 23.)

VI. THE SANHEDRIM, REASSEMBLED AT DAYBREAK, CONDEMN JESUS TO DEATH. 66. And as soon as it was day. The first possible moment after sunrise. The elders, etc., etc., come together. In a regular meeting of the Sanhedrim called for the purpose, to ratify formally what had been done informally and illegally before, in the night. Either some of the things said in the night session (John 18: 26; 63-66) were repeated at this more regular session; or Luke in this place gives an account of what took place before the Sanhedrim, without any regard to the exact time or portion of the meeting when it occurred.

67. Art thou the Christ? The Messiah, the expected Prophet and King. If I tell you, ye will not believe. He returned to "cast pearls before swine," or to "give that which is holy to dogs."

68. If I also ask you. If I plead My cause, will you believe in Me? Jesus, the Messiah, which will prove My claims, it will do no good, for you have already prejudiced My case, and are determined to kill Me.

69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. A shadow in our thoughts, coming all power at His control; in contrast with His present apparent weakness. Now they have the power, then He will have it; now they are on the judgment seat and He at the bar, then He will be the judge and they will be the criminals before Him.

70. They said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? Do you really claim what you say? Do you really claim to be the Son of God? Do you really claim to be the Messiah, which will prove My claims, it will do no good, for you have already prejudiced My case, and are determined to kill Me.

71. What need we any further witness? They misrepresented what He said as blasphemy. Then the high priest rent his clothes, "an act almost as much a formal sign of condemnation as the putting on of the black cap by an English judge."

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