

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER.

STUDIES IN ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

(Condensed from Peabody's Select Notes.)

Lesson V. July 31. Acts 4: 1-18.
PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

EXPLANATORY.

THE ARREST. (1) By WHOM. 1. As they spoke unto the people. The great crowds (ver. 4) and the excitement drew the attention of the temple authorities. The captain of the temple was an officer having a body of Levites under his command, who preserved order about the temple, and in that respect performed a sort of military service. His presence implied that the authorities were afraid of a disturbance from the crowd surrounding the apostles. And the Sadducees. One of the two larger sects of the Jews, whose name was derived from Sadoc, their founder. Came upon them. To arrest them.

(2) WHY. 2. Being grieved. Rev. Ver. being so troubled. That they taught the people. That they set up to be teachers without permission from those who claim the authority over the instruction of the people. They objected also to the doctrine taught. Prescribed through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Better, as in the Rev. Ver., proclaimed in Jesus. This would arouse the feelings of the Sadducees. The resurrection is said to be in Jesus, because His resurrection is a pledge that all should rise. "In Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15: 22).

(3) WHAT WAS DONE WITH THEM. 3. Laid hands on them. Arrested them. The language implies some act of violence in the arrest. Put them in hold: i. e., in prison. The word means ward, safe keeping. For it was now evening. Near six o'clock. And it was contrary to Jewish law at the time (founded in Jer. 21: 12) to try any person after sunset.

(4) THE TWO RESULTS of the apostles' preaching. The first was that just described, the opposition of enemies. The second is described in the next verse. 4. Many of them. Not deterred by the arrest of their leaders, Persecution does not prevent the truth from prevailing. And the number of the men. The word translated "men" no doubt included men and women. Some commentators would restrict the term to men only. Was (Rev. Ver. came to be) about five thousand. Not 5,000 new believers at this time, but the whole number of disciples, including the 3,000 mentioned in 2: 41, amounted now to 5,000.

THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM. First. THE COURT. The Sanhedrim, or council (ver. 15), the highest court of the Jews. The place of assembly was the Hall Gashith, "on the south side of the court of the priests," or to some chamber in the basement on the temple mount, to which about this time it was transferred. 5. And it came to pass on the morrow. In the meanwhile they had time to summon the members of the Sanhedrim. This enumeration implies that special pains were taken to insure a full attendance at this sitting of the Sanhedrim. Their rulers. Designates the Sanhedrists in general, since they were all rulers. The Sanhedrim is here described by an enumeration of the three orders which composed that body: viz., the chief priests, who are mentioned last in this instance (ver. 6); the elders, or heads of families ("a distinct body, but with representatives in the Sanhedrim"); and the scribes, or teachers of the law (also a powerful organization with representative in the great tribunal). The classes of men which composed this great tribunal of the Jews were probably distributed as follows: 24 priests, 24 elders, and 22 scribes or lawyers. Only men who were morally and physically without fault were eligible to membership. They must be middle-aged, tall, good-looking, wealthy and learned. They must also be fathers, and must have passed through various lower offices.

6. And Annas the high priest. Annas had been deposed from the high priest's office by the Romans; and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was made high priest by them. But the Jews regarded Annas as ecclesiastically his high priest. He was the most influential person among the Jews at this time. John and Alexander. Nothing certain is known of them, but probably they are to be counted among the relatives of Annas. As many as were of the kindred of the high priest. The same phrase is used by Joseph (Ant. 15: 3, 4, 11), and may mean either those who were personally related by ties of blood to the high priest for the time being, or the heads of the twenty-four courses of priests (see Matt. 2: 4; 26: 3; Luke 1: 5). All these had probably taken part in the Lord's condemnation. Gathered together at Jerusalem. From their various places of abode or resort. This shows the importance they attached to this case.

SECOND. THE CHARGE. 7. Set them in the midst. The Sanhedrim sat in a semi-circle; the president being in the middle of the arc, the accused standing in the centre. By their side stood the man that was healed. Here was just the audience the apostles wanted. There was no other possible way in which they could have gained a hearing from the Jewish leaders and preached the gospel to them. They asked. The tense implies that this question was put repeatedly. By what power, or by what name. Power is force, name is authority. By what magical power did you do this, and what right had you to use such power?

THIRD. PETER'S DEFENCE. 8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost. In fulfillment of Christ's promise (Matt. 10: 19, 20). 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. It was this power that had changed Peter from the disciple who denied his Lord, into a fearless speaker for his Lord. This was a greater miracle than that wrought on the lame man. We shall know whether we have received the Holy Ghost by the fire that is in us. The Holy Ghost is fire.

9. If we this day be examined, etc. Ironical exhortation runs through St. Peter's reply, which may be paraphrased thus: "If we really are arraigned, which seems hardly credible, on account of the good deed done to this poor man (pointing to the healed cripple), know all of you," etc. Of the good deed. In alleging it to be a good deed, the apostle implicitly denies that it is the result of magic, or the work of an evil spirit; Satan does not confer benefits upon man. Good gifts can only come from Him who is good. Made whole. Complete; restored to his true nature. The verb has a pregnant, underlying meaning, suggesting the thought of a spiritual as well as bodily restoration.

10. By (better, in) the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (quoting the title nailed on the cross), when ye crucified. The boldness of the declaration was startling. He presses home the fact, that, though Pilate had given the formal sentence, it was they who had crucified their King. Whom God raised from the dead. This fact convicted them of sin. They were arraigned against God. Moreover, Peter insists on the fact of the resurrection because that was the crowning proof that Jesus was the Messiah, and was then living in heaven. Doth this man stand here. As a spectator, or witness, or fellow-prisoner.

11. This is the stone set at nought by you, the builders. The reference is to Ps. 118: 22. Christ applies the same prophecy to Himself in Matt. 21: 42. To the unuttered objection of the Sanhedrim that this Jesus had already been condemned as an impostor, he responds by referring them to this prophecy. Head of the corner. Not the cornerstone, 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.

FOURTH. THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION. 12. Neither is there salvation in any other. Peter now proclaims a salvation, not from disease and infirmity of body, but from the disease of sin. The Greek has the article before "salvation." That of which Peter spoke was the salvation which the rulers professed to be looking for. He makes us pure and humble and holy, every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. There is none other Name "Name" here stands for Jesus Christ Himself, and all there is in Him of wisdom, power, love, divineness; just as a man's name to a note stands for all a man is and has—his property, his character, his ability, his integrity.

RENDERING THE VERDICT. 13. Now when they saw the boldness. As manifested in Peter's speech. Perceived that they were unarmed. Not trained in their schools, not educated in literature. A fact that no one can hide if he speaks. And ignorant. Not one of the learned or aristocratic class, but he had more real power than they all. They marvelled. Whence such men could gain such power and freedom of speech. They took knowledge of them (they recognized the fact) that they had been with Jesus. They had seen them at different times in the temple with Jesus, and in various places. Their bearing was like His, their spirit their boldness, their works were like His.

Curiosities of Choir Music.

We have read about the newly-imported German tenor who on an Easter morning electrified a "heavily mortgaged congregation" by singing, and over again. "He will raise a debt [dead]. He will raise a debt, in ze twinkling of an eye." But the following musical incident is related by one who recently attended a fashionable church. The choir started with a recitation of the lilies of the field, and after singing the changes on the word "consider," until all the ideas of its connection was lost, they began to tell the congregation through the mouth of the soprano, that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed." Straightway the soprano was reinforced by the basso, who declared that Solomon was most decidedly and emphatically not arrayed—was not arrayed. Then the alto ventured it as her opinion that Solomon was not arrayed when the tenor without a moment's hesitation sang as if it had been officially announced, that "he was not arrayed." Then the feelings of the congregation had been harrowed up sufficiently, and our sympathies all aroused, poor Solomon, whose numerous wives allowed him to go about in such a fashion, the choir at length, in a most cool and composed manner, informed us that the idea they intended to convey was, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed "like one of these"—these what? So long a time had elapsed since they sang of the lilies, that the thread was entirely lost, and by "these" one naturally concluded that the choir was designated. Arrayed like one of these? We should think not, indeed! Solomon in a Prince Albert or a cutaway coat? No, most decidedly. Solomon in the very zenith of his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Despite the experience of the morning, the hope still remained that in the evening a sacred song might be sung in a manner that would not excite our risibilities or leave the impression that we had been listening to a case of blackmail. But again off went the nimble soprano with the very laudable though startling announcement, "I will wash." Straightway the alto, not to be outdone, declared that she "would wash." And the tenor finding it to be the thing, warbled forth that he would wash. Then the deep-chested basso, as though calling up his fortitude for the plunge, bellowed forth the stern resolve that he also would wash. Next a short interlude on the organ, strongly suggestive of the waves, after which the choir individually and collectively asserted the firm, unshakable resolve that they would wash. At last they solved the problem by stating that they proposed to "wash their hands in innocence."—Cathedral Chimes.

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"A Born Tease."

BY EMILY HUNTINGTON MILLER.

We were sitting in the nursery, my friend with the baby on her lap and her little daughter absorbed in not less real motherly care for the doll she was so softly rocking in its cradle. The door opened and a handsome little fellow of six years came into the room, and with a courtesy that showed his training, stood quietly waiting to claim his mother's attention for some childish request. I was not too much occupied, however, to notice his footstep slyly out to give the cradle a perilous lurch that brought a cry of alarm from the little maiden as she caught at her dolly and began pating and soothing her.

"Robbie," said his mother, turning toward him, "why do you bother May so? What is it you want?"

The boy made known his request and presently started to leave the room, but caught his sister's doll as he passed, carrying her by one foot to the door and tossing her back to the agonized little mother.

"Robbie!" said the mother again. "I declare that boy is a born tease. He is very fond of May and as generous as he can be, but he does love to tease her. Boys are cruel animals till they outgrow it."

The mother turned complacently to the soft, little creature in her lap, and said, as she smoothed the round cheek: "I guess we must give baby to Mrs. M—." She has no baby and this one is so much trouble."

Instantly the doll was laid down and May was at her mother's knee with one arm thrown protectively across the baby, while an anxious little face was turned toward me.

"Yes," said the mother, "she cries so much and she can't walk or talk, and we don't want her anyway."

The mother made a motion as if to hand me the baby, and the child burst into a perfect tumult of noise that were not easily checked by the mother's declaration that she was only in fun and my own assurance that I would on no account take away the little sister that God had sent for her very own. But as I went away I thought about that "born tease" and the generation of his brothers and sisters, and remembered the old colored woman's comment: "Taint so much cuttin' out as makin' up that spile folks."

How many times do we see a similar farce enacted for the sake of drawing from another child a protest that arises from real distress and fear and in what a multitude of ways are children harassed, annoyed and mortified for the amusement of older people? Is it any wonder that they soon learn to put their lessons in practice? I have seen a husband subject his wife to moments of agonized terror by insisting upon tossing the baby into the air, or balancing it upon his hand, his pleasure in his own feat apparently unmarred by the mother's suffering, and I have wondered if he were a "born tease" and had in some way failed to outgrow it, or whether it were only that mischievous training had developed a cruel delight in the power of torture in place of the spirit of chivalry. Cruelty is not a thing to be outgrown, but a thing to be fought and shamed down and driven out by the spirit of love and gentleness. A mother cannot too early or too earnestly impress upon her children that only cruelty can find any enjoyment in what gives pain to another.

It is no more a boy's nature to torment cats and tease girls than it is to do anything else that is unmanly and contemptible, and the training that recognizes such things as natural features of masculinity is sowing seed for a bitter harvest. Gentleness to all helpless creatures should be so taught that the whole manly nature of the boy will revolt at inflicting suffering upon them, and his chivalry to women have a deeper foundation than the customs of society which may be and by temper his public exhibitions of rudeness and contempt.

The "born tease" is a terror in many a family and he is the father of the selfish, tyrannical man, but he is often more sinned against than sinning, and I want in his behalf to enter my protest against all teasing of children by grown people as among the "sports that kill."—Congregationalist.

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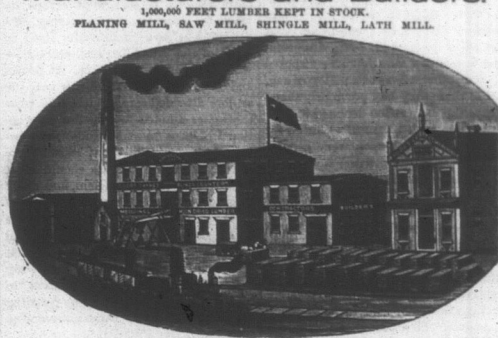
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