

The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter. Lesson 3, May 21, 1899.

CHRIST BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST.—JOHN 18: 15-27.

Commit Verses 23-25.

Golden Text.—He came unto his own, and his own received him not.—JOHN 1: 11.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The trials before the high priest, with the mockeries, and the denials of Peter, lasted from about 2 o'clock till dawn of Friday April 7, A. D. 30.

Place.—The residence of the high priest, the site of which is not known with certainty, but many think it was in the southwestern part of the city, on Zion, near David's tomb.

The two trials. Jesus endured two trials:—

1. The first before the Jewish authorities, who, having decided to destroy Jesus, must formulate some charge against him, the punishment of which was death.

2. The second before the Roman authorities, who alone could inflict the death penalty.

The first of these is the subject of today's lesson. This trial consisted of three separate stages or acts:—

1. The preliminary examination before the high priests (regarded by many as the trial recorded by John).

2. The informal trial before Caiaphas and members of the Sanhedrim (regarded by many as that recorded in Matthew and Mark).

3. The formal condemnation at a regular meeting of the Sanhedrim (regarded by many as the trial recorded by Luke).

In connection with these were the denials by Peter, and the mockery of Jesus.

THE ARRIVAL AT THE PALACE OF THE HIGH PRIEST (John 18: 13, 14; Matt. 26: 57).—Early Friday morning between 1 and 2 o'clock.

It is probable that Annas and Caiaphas occupied different portions of the same place, and that here, too, was held the irregular meeting of the members of the Sanhedrim hastily summoned from their homes in the middle of the night.

A Western house looks into the street, but an Oriental into its own interior, having no opening to the front except a great arched gateway, shut in with a heavy door or gate. When this door is opened, it discloses a broad passage penetrating the front of the building and leading into a square, paved courtyard, open to the sky, around which the house is built, and into which its rooms, both upstairs and downstairs, look. On the side of the passage, inside the outer gate, there is a room or lodge for the porter who opens and shuts the gate; and in the gate there is a little wicket by which individuals can be let in or out. The band with Jesus entered by the large gate, Peter coming later, by the wicket gate.

PETER'S FIRST DENIAL.—Vs. 15-18. Peter followed Jesus. He followed afar off (Matt. 26: 58), and was, therefore, in more danger of denying his Lord than he would have been if he had kept closer to him. Another disciple, John, who went with the crowd through the gate, for he was known unto the high priest. But Peter stood (was standing) at the door. The wicket gate, having in some way been shut. That other disciple... brought in Peter. He helped his intimate friend, leading him indeed into temptation, unconsciously, but also leading him near to Christ, who could save him in temptation. Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? Peter may have been seen before by this maid. He saith, I am not. This was both falsehood and treason to his Master and the new kingdom. He could not have denied Christ with John by his side. Then he had gone among the persons gathered around the open brazier of charcoal (v. 18), for it was cold, and here he warmed himself. It is probable that the air was ringing with jest and laughter about Jesus, but Peter did not interrupt; he kept silence and tried to look as like one of the scorers as he could. It is always dangerous when a follower of Christ is sitting among Christ's enemies without letting it be known what he is.

THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION BEFORE ANNAS.—Vs. 19-23. The high priest, Annas. Jesus was led first to Annas because, though deposed by Rome, he was still the legitimate high priest according to the law of Moses, the office being for life. Annas was the virtual head of ecclesiastical affairs, although Caiaphas was the nominal head. (1) It was he, with Caiaphas, who sent the band to arrest Jesus.

(2) It was his servant whom Peter had attacked. (3) He was a Sadducee, and thus directly and bitterly opposed to the teaching of Jesus. (4) He was a bad, worldly man, and a bitter enemy of the new

teacher and new teaching. (5) Jesus had twice cleansed the temple from the traffic which was enriching the rulers, and they must have been highly incensed against him. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. This inquiry probably had two objects; one was to entrap Jesus into saying something which could be twisted into a charge of blasphemy, the other was that it allowed time for the Sanhedrim to be summoned, and messengers were despatched to scour the city for the members, for "none knew what might happen if the multitude, when it awoke in the morning, found the popular preacher in the hands of his enemies. Once in the hands of the Romans, there would be no danger. Jesus answered him, I spake openly, etc. There was nothing in his teaching to be concealed. The high priest could find out all about him if he wished. Why askest thou me? Let them find the witnesses, for there were plenty of them. One of the officers... struck Jesus with the palm of his hand. It was an insult and outrage. If I have spoken evil. In the remark just made. Jesus had simply claimed the common rights of all men. But if well, why smitest thou me? It is safe to infer that the officer's blow was a severe one.

THE IRREGULAR TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS AND THE SANHEDRIM.—V. 24. Between 2 and 4 o'clock Friday morning; probably in the palace of Caiaphas.

Now Annas had sent him, etc. Thus far the investigation had been unofficial, or private. Caiaphas, as the real high priest, was president of the Sanhedrim. But the trial was irregular because it was against their law to try any one by night.

The charge was blasphemy, the penalty for which was death, according to Jewish law.

The witnesses were two men who perverted a saying of Jesus, and even these did not agree.

The sentence was pronounced, the charge being confirmed by Jesus' witness to the truth when he could keep silence no longer, but his silence might be construed as a withdrawal of his claims. He told them plainly that he was the Messiah. Having formulated their charge, they must adjourn till dawn to bring the case before the Sanhedrim at a regular meeting.

MOCKERY OF JESUS.—In the court of Caiaphas' palace. After the adjournment of the irregular trial from 3 to 5 o'clock Friday morning. 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 formal meeting of the Sanhedrim could take place. During this interval Jesus was insulted, and struck, and shamefully treated by the crowd. In the original no less than five forms of b-ating are referred to by the evangelists in describing this pathetic scene.

PETER'S LATER DENIALS AND REPENTANCE.—Vs. 25-27. During the trial, or possibly the last one during the mockeries. Simon Peter stood, warming himself, as we saw above. To understand this scene we must put all the narratives together, remembering that probably Peter was beset and worried by a crowd of menials. He denied. Here again was a denial with more positiveness. One of the servants. About an hour later (Luke 12: 59). Being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off. This statement gives one reason why Peter now denied with so much vehemence. Peter might lose his life, not as a martyr, but as a criminal. Peter then denied again. So John records; but Mark, whose Gospel is supposed to have been derived from Peter, says that he began to curse and to swear. And immediately the cock crew. This was the sign which Jesus had given to Peter. Then it was that the Lord turned and looked on Peter. It was enough. Like an arrow through his inmost soul shot the mute anguish of that reproachful glance.

Peter's Repentance. Then Peter saw himself as he was. He went out and wept bitterly. How Christ restored Peter is recorded in the last chapter of John. John had to record the fall in order to record the restoration.

THE FORMAL CONDEMNATION OF JESUS BY THE SANHEDRIM.—Recorded by Luke (22: 66-71). At dawn, Friday morning. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

When men are predetermined on a course against religion, or Christ, or the Bible, no arguments, however true, are of any avail. What an array of witnesses they might have found had they wished to learn the truth! It is still the same; many men refuse to look at the true witnesses for the gospel, which are many and strong. Peter's fall is recorded, because the gospel seems to deny the actual defects of good men, because the truth is helpful to others who fail, showing the possibility of recovery, and the only way to recovery.

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.

Steps to Peter's Fall. He had been self-seeking, striving to be accounted greatest; he had been self-confident; he had separated from his brethren; he had slept when he should have watched and prayed; he had ventured into evil company as one of them. His fall was the fruit of seeds that he himself had sown. Men fall in private long before they fall in public.

Another wrong course in Peter's temptation was his putting himself in the way of it without boldly committing himself on the right side. The only safe way is to keep out of temptation, or to be so full of faith and courage when forced into it that it cannot harm you.

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

Peter's Repentance and Restoration. (1) He went out and wept bitterly. His repentance was deep and complete. (2) Contrast it with the false repentance of Judas. (3) To the repentant Peter restoration was possible; and after a season of bitterest sorrow it was granted fully and freely (John 21: 15-17). (4) Peter was permanently changed for the better by his experience, and he uses this experience in urging others to escape the snare into which he had fallen (1 Pet. 3: 15; 5: 6-10). (5) The genuineness of his repentance and restoration was proved by a long life of devoted service to his Master.

We do not judge Peter aright unless we take into the account, not only his sin, but also his repentance, and the change wrought in his character. It is easy to see faults and forget virtues, to look at the thorn and forget the rose, to imitate the faults of great men, while we neglect their virtues.

Scattering Deeds of Kindness.

That's a Canadian dime. I can't take that, said the post office clerk. The child looked at the rejected coin, and then at her unstamped letter perplexedly.

Here's a dime—I'll change with you, said a young woman standing by.

Oh, thank you! said the little one gratefully. I ran all the way to get mamma's mail in time, and it would have been too late if I had had to go back.

How thoughtful that was, I said to myself. How few people, comparatively, would have bothered to do that for a child; and yet how little it costs—and how much it often means.

A little later in the day, it so happened that I met again the young woman of whom I have spoken. It was at a restaurant at the noon hour, in a hurried, crowded throng. Dear me, isn't it warm! sighed a flushed, nervous looking girl near me, to her companion.

Won't you take this fan? said a sweet voice. I looked and lo! the speaker was the angel of the stamp! I was very much interested in the young woman by this time, and unconsciously myself comfortably in my corner took more time for my meal than was necessary, in order to observe her. I did not have long to wait to see another proof of her kindness and consideration.

This is the last order of Indian pudding, said one of the waiters to a pale, poorly dressed girl, as she set down a steaming plate before her neighbor, the young woman whom I was observing.

Oh, dear! murmured the girl disappointedly.

Won't you take this? I would exactly as soon have something else for dessert. Quick as a flash the dish of pudding was transferred. That young woman is worth her weight in gold, I said to myself as I rose to go. I wonder when I shall see her again.

It was months before I did see her again. This time it was at a reception. I wondered whether she would be able to do any kindly act in such a formal gathering, and observed her closely. It was not ten minutes before I saw her talking to a shy, unattractive looking girl in a corner, and introducing her to her friends. Nor was this all I noted. As I left I heard her saying something to the soloist of the afternoon, to which the reply was, You tell me that you have enjoyed my singing. I want to tell you how much I have appreciated your telling me so. The sparkling eyes and animated face attested the appreciation.

These three brief occasions were all upon which I saw the angel of the stamp, and yet how fragrant they were with acts of friendliness and consideration! At the end of such a life how manifold must be

the good deeds placed to the account.

The giving of ourselves because we can no more help giving than the flower can help unfolding its petals, or the rose exhaling its fragrance, that is Christliness indeed: it is the most potent of all levers for bringing about that blessed day to which the whole creation moves.—Eleanor Root in the Standard.

Tobacco.

One of the ablest physicians we have ever known, himself a smoker, declared that no man could use tobacco without injury. He admitted that he knew it was harmful to him. We have every reason to believe his statement. The difference in the evil effects of the habit in men is a difference of degree, and this only.

Why men will tie themselves with a habit which is useless, injurious, offensive and expensive is a mystery. Well, no, it is not, either. They are already under the power of the habit, they have not the will-force to break it; or else they will not exert the power they have. The habit holds them. And in eight cases out of ten this habit was formed in boyhood. Before they had maturity of judgment to decide wisely they were influenced by the example of men about them, and in order to be like men they formed the habit. Now they are its slaves. Alas, that this evil should prevail as it does!

Whatever may be said about the effects of tobacco on adults, there is no difference of opinion as to its injury to growing boys. All physicians and teachers are agreed as to this. The boy who uses tobacco can never be the man physically or mentally he would have been without it. It will tell on his after life. And there is no escape from the fact that the example of men makes tobacco slaves of the boys. Thus every man who uses tobacco takes upon himself his proportion of the responsibility for the habit in the boys, and for all its evils. He cannot escape this.—Christian Advocate.

Bearing Fruit.

A poor woman was cleaning a store-room one day. In this room was a pile of old magazines and picture-papers. She said to the lady of the house: May I take two or three of the picture papers home to my little crippled girl? she likes so much to look at pictures. You may have all of them if you wish, said the lady. Oh, replied the poor woman, I can't thank you enough; they will make Jennie happy for weeks and months. You may also take to her these two scrap books and a bottle of mucilage, said the lady. A few months after this, the woman came again to work at this same house. She said, Jennie's gone, she is safe with Jesus; and I want you to know what a pleasure those papers were to her. She filled the two books full of pictures, pasting them very neatly; and she made me promise that I would give them to some other little crippled girl, so that some one else might get as much pleasure as she had got out of them. This little girl bore fruit for Jesus because she was kind to others for his sake. You can certainly do at least some small thing to show your love for Jesus, and for others for his sake.

What He Made.

I have made one thousand dollars the last three months, said a prosperous liquor-seller to a group of men standing near his saloon. You have made more than that, quietly remarked a listener. What is that? was the quick response. You have made wretched homes, women and children poor, sick, and weary of life. You have made my two sons drunkards. You have made their mother a broken hearted woman. Oh, you have made much more than I can reckon, but you'll get the full account some day.

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