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The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter Lesson 6 May 11 1902

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON.

Acts 12: 1-9.

Study Verses 1-19.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* Psa. 34: 7.

LEARN BY HEART.

V. 5; Heb. 1: 14; Psa. 91: 1-4.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Attention is drawn especially to the contrasts in the providential history of different persons, as the death of James and deliverance of Peter; the long life of Herod that slew the Bethlehem innocents, and the short life of the Herod that murdered James.

Time.—A. D. 44. In the spring. The Passover that year was April 1-8. The martyrdom of James took place just before, and the release of Peter just after, and the death of Herod in the same month.

Place.—Jerusalem. The prison was, perhaps, the tower of Antonia.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JAMES.—Vs. 1, 2. *Now about that time.* During the events occurring in Antioch. It was the spring of A. D. 44. *Herod the king.*

It was well to keep in mind the four Herods most intimately connected with the gospel history:—

1. Herod the Great, the founder of the family, was the murderer of the innocents at Bethlehem. He died the spring after the birth of Jesus, B. C. 4.

2. Herod Antipas, his son (B. C. 4-A. D. 39), was the Herod who murdered John the Baptist.

3. Herod Agrippa I., grandson of Herod the Great, was the king who murdered the Apostle James in the lesson for to-day (A. D. 37 44)

4. Herod Agrippa II., before whom Paul defended himself (Acts 26: 28.)

The churches had enjoyed a period of rest from persecution by the Jews.

In pursuance of this policy he *stretched forth his hand to vex*, to maltreat. *Certain of the church.* Because the Jews were intensely opposed to them. *And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.* James was the son of Zebedee. He was one of the first disciples of Jesus, and with John and Peter was one of the most favored of his followers. It was this prominence and activity in the cause that probably led Herod to select him for his first victim.

DEATH OF HEROD.—Within about a month after slaying James (March) Herod himself died a horrible death at Cesarea (April). He went to Cesarea to a festival given in honor of Claudius. A multitude assembled to see the festival and the king, in all the pride of high state, appeared in robes inwrought with silver threads. Some of the flatterers raised the cry 'Deign to be gracious to us, thou divine one! hitherto we have honored thee as a man; henceforth we own thee more than mortal!' Instead of rebuking such lying servility he drank in this hollow adulation with pleasure. Next moment a great pain racked his bowels. Conscience-stricken, the poor wretch felt that the wrath of God had struck him down. In the Acts we are told that he was eaten of worms.

THE IMPRISONMENT OF PETER.—Vs. 3. 4. He saw it pleased the Jews, as he desired. *He proceeded further to take Peter also*, as the most prominent disciple. *And when he had apprehended him.* It was a few days after the martyrdom of James, and at the beginning of the Passover feast, which continued April 1 to 8. *Put him in prison.* The military prison within the fortress of Antonia, which was also the residence of Herod in Jerusalem. *Delivered him to four quarternions of soldiers.* A quarternion is a band of four soldiers on guard at one time, two within, one on each side of Peter, bound one to each of his arms with chains, a third posted outside the door, and a fourth in the passage leading to the outside gate. All this besides prison doors and great iron gates. Escape was humanly impossible. *Intending after Easter* (that is, the Passover) *to bring him forth*, to sentence him to death before *the people.* He would not execute him during the Passover festival, because that would offend the Jews.

THE PRAYER-MEETING FOR PETER.—V. 5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison* for some days. *But prayer was made.* Prayer was the only weapon that could be used. It was Herod with all the power of the Roman Empire, on one side, and the church holding on by prayer to God, on the other side. *Without ceasing*, either in time or intensity. *Of the church.* The members of the church were so numerous that they must have met in different companies. The central point of meeting was the well-known house of Mary, the mother of John, which is called Mark." (1) For the release of Peter, if it was God's will. (2) That Peter might be sustained and strengthened and comforted. (3) Most of all, that Christ's kingdom might prosper; and all that came to Peter might, in some wise way, aid the cause dearer than life to him and to them.

HOW THE PRAYER WAS ANSWERED—Vs. 6-11. *When Herod would have brought him forth.* The prayer continued for more than a week. *The same night.* The night before his trial. Perhaps the delay was to test and increase the faith of the disciples. *Peter was sleeping* In conscious peace and trust in God. *Between two soldiers bound with two chains.* A common Roman mode of securing prisoners. *The keepers before the door* outside of the cell. Every avenue of escape was guarded *And behold.* Peter was not missed by the guards till sunrise,—about six o'clock. It was, then, in the fourth watch, some time between three and six o'clock, that the angel presence entered the prison chambers for the loss would have been discovered at the change of guards at three o'clock, had Peter then been missing. *The* (an) *angel of the Lord came upon him.* Angels wait on us as truly as ever they waited on Abraham, or Jacob, or Moses, or Elijah, or Moses, or Mary or Jesus himself. *And a light shined.* The natural effluence of angelic presence. *And he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up.* Awoke him from his sleep. *His chains fell off*, that bound him to the sleeping soldiers. *Gird thyself.* The Orientals, when they go to rest, simply loosen their girdle and lay aside their outer garments. *Bind on thy sandals*, the shoes of the poor. *Cast thy garment.* He would need these articles, and the action showed him that the appearance was a reality and not a dream. *First and second ward.* The guards were probably sleeping. *The iron gate* Peter could not have opened it. *Leadeth unto the city* This may have formed the termination of one avenue which connected the prison with the town. *The angel departed.* Having done his work. Peter could not find his own way. *Was come to himself.* Awaked from his dazed condition. *Now I know.* Hitherto he did not know what the Lord's plans for him were, whether to die as a martyr, or go on and preach the gospel.

HOW THE ANSWER WAS RECEIVED.—Vs. 12-19.—*When he had considered.* He saw all the elements of the case. *Came to the house of Mary.* Because it was probably here that the disciples frequently gathered. *Mother of John.... Mark* John is his Hebrew name, and Mark (Marcus) his Latin name. *Peter knocked at the door of the gate.* The gateway to the street, always kept fastened. *A damsel.... Rhoda* (Rose). She seemed to have been the servant of Mary. *Came to harken.* The gate is never opened till the visitor has satisfied inquiries. *When she knew Peter's voice.* An indication that Peter had before been a frequent visitor at the house. *She opened not the gate for gladness.* She was so eager to tell the others assembled there that Peter was alive and free, that she ran back and forgot to open the door. *It is his angel.* His guardian angel, assuming his form and voice, a common Jewish belief. *They were astonished.* This does not indicate that these praying disciples had small expectation of an answer. They were astonished, not at the fact of an answer, but at the strange way in which it came. *Go shew these things unto James.* The leading disciple in the church at Jerusalem. *He departed.* To escape from Herod. He could not count on deliverance if he refused to use the means. But he lived many years after Herod was dead.

The Duty of the Mother in Her Home.

The duties of the mother begin long before her children come into life—aye, and the duties of the father, also. He needs to know that the physical sins which he may thoughtlessly commit in his early manhood, may be fearfully punished in the person of his child, by the action of the remorseless law of heredity; that Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,—wild oats, or whatever else may be sown; that it is the husband and the wife together who make the home; and that, if he is intemperate, extravagant, ill-tempered, indelicate, arrogant, ignorant, and obstinate, his wife cannot make the home what it ought to be, no matter how wise, loving, and prudent she may be Enlightened motherhood needs to be supplemented by enlightened fatherhood, if the home is to become what it should be—the greatest civilizing and uplifting agency of the world.

A mother should know all that science can teach of the prenatal laws of being and of heredity. Her acquaintance with physiology should not be the superficial knowledge given in the ordinary school, or college, even. It should be a thorough exposition of the mysteries of her own physical being, with a clear understanding of the hygienic laws she must obey, if she would grow into healthy, enduring womanhood. She should be taught the laws of ventilation and of nutrition, what constitutes healthful food, the care of infancy, the nursing of the sick, and in what that vigilant and scrupulous cleanliness consists which almost prohibits certain forms of disease, called by the doctors dirt-diseases, from crossing one's threshold. The details of this necessary knowledge can only be learned in practice, and slowly. But the foundation must be laid in early study. The mother must dignify these matters in the mind of her daughter by her own observance of them; and there are pouring in upon us such floods of light pertaining to all matters of physical life and well-being that the mothers of the future in these respects, ought to be a great improvement on the mothers of the past and present.—Mary A. Livermore, in February Success.

The Traveller's List.

A noted traveller once said that, before entering any new land, he always spent a few days in making a list of the words he needed. The language might have many thousands of words, but there were only a small number that it was absolutely necessary for him to know, upon his journey. He must be able to ask, for instance, for a fire, for food, for light, for shelter. He would need to know how to reckon the money of the country, and understand the ordinary salutations of the natives. In some countries, seventy words of the language had carried him through, without the aid of any interpreter. But then, every word of the seventy meant something, and was an important word. Every word in his whole list had to be useful. A mistaken word, a wrong phrase, might spoil his entire journey, or, at the very least, make delay and trouble.

So it was a very wise thing to make the list before he started, and make it carefully. He was not like some boys and girls that I know who are starting upon a very important journey without any thought of the words they will need. They will be sure to meet obstacles and dangers on the way, for it is a hard journey; they may find themselves in strange positions without a friend near. Yet they are not learning the words that will help them through. In fact, some of them are actually learning the wrong words for things instead of the right ones.

What do I mean? Well, I mean that each boy and girl must journey through the unknown country we call Life. We must journey whether we want to or not, through its dangers and its strange changes of scene. No one has ever gone over just our path before; it is a new country for each of us. There are certain words that will carry us through if we learn and use them. They are the traveller's list for the journey of life. Yet we are so foolish that often we refuse to use these words, and so make terrible mistakes as we go.

If we want to know the words we can easily find them in the great guidebook that has helped so many millions of travellers safely through every danger—the Holy Bible.

But some boys and girls murmur at this idea. "The Bible—oh, that is old fashioned." Well, for that matter, life is old-fashioned, too, for it has been going on for centuries and ages.

Every wrong word on the list means a danger. "Falsehood," "laziness," "selfishness," "impurity," "irreverence"—alas how many travellers have perished miserably through these!

Let us make the right list, and stick to it, if we want to journey safely, and reach the Heavenly City at the end.—Sabbath School Visitor.

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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 have 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 so bad my body was tied up towards me. My brother recommended Ripans Tabules 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 move my bowels regularly, for which I had been taking physics all the time. I have no more headaches and can sleep well; in fact, I feel as light as the air which I breathe, and 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 190 pounds. I am sorry that I did not commence using the Tabules a year ago, for they would have saved me a great deal of pain and suffering."

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