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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter-Lesson XI.—June 16.

JESUS CRUCIFIED.—Mark 15 : 21-39.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*He humbled himself, 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 procession 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 hammer 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 followed by a multitude. *And they compel.* The Roman officer had authority to press into the service, either horses or men. *One Simon a Cyrenian.* He belonged to Cyrene, in Africa, then a flourishing city between 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 conjecture 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 compelled Simon to help Jesus. It may have been that this connection with Jesus' sufferings led him to become 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 anæsthetic, 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 atonement for the sins of the world. It was an act of sublime heroism and courage. *And when they had crucified him.* The victim was laid upon 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 together or separately were nailed below. The body was terribly wrenched when the cross was raised and dropped into its place: the concussion often dislocated the limbs. Inflammation of the wounds speedily set in; intolerable thirst and ever-increasing pain resulted; the burning 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 before. 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 human comparison; the effect of ingratitude, 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 crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death *can* have of the horrible and ghastly,—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, publicity 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 sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. Such was the death to which Christ was doomed. *And they* (the four soldiers) *parted his garments*: divided them among themselves. *Casting 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 accusation*: 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 foreigners 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 proclaimed 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 imprisoned 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 believer. 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 hostility to it, because of its new triumph. *And they that were crucified with him reviled him*: either both did at first, and then one changed; 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 prevailing; of the great sufferings of the atonement for sin; of the darkness 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 resurrection 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" indicates 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 recorded in John and Luke. *And gave up the ghost*: his spirit. Before this time the darkness had cleared 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 endured to the mysterious woe that pressed 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 manipulate each. The rending of the veil 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; showing 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 prejudices 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 widsom 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 (1) 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 forgiveness 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 believe.

NOTICE

Is hereby given that all communications in respect to matters affecting the Department of Indian Affairs, should be addressed to the Honorable E. Dewdney as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, and not as Minister of the Interior, or to the undersigned. All Officers of the Department should address their official letters to the undersigned.

L. VANKOUGHNET,
Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs.

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