

question, for behind it a negation lay hid." He meant to say, "Now you are in deep water. No answer can explain *truth*." I FIND IN HIM NO FAULT AT ALL. A striking testimony to his pure and blameless life. Heb. 7. 26. Why did not Pilate stand by his own conviction? He was too weak to resist a clamorous mob.

... Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, who chanced to be in Jerusalem. Herod returned him to Pilate, who made a feeble effort to save him. But the intimation that in this case he would show disloyalty to Caesar was too much to be resisted, hence he condemned the Lord to death. Destitute of manliness, he did a wicked deed, which God, however, overruled according to his own purposes. Acts 4. 27, 28.

3. LESSONS.

1. Be ware of a prejudiced judge.
2. A weak judge smarts under reasonable appeal.
3. The spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom.
4. Christ's kingdom not to be sustained by force of arms.
5. To bear witness to truth, a royal destiny.
6. Christ is king.

English Teacher's Notes.

In this lesson we have to treat just one episode in the trial of Christ, the former of the two conversations between him and Pilate alone inside the "judgment hall." But to understand it we must see what happened before. For instance, the passage for reading begins with Pilate's question to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" But why should he ask such a question? We must find out the reason of it. And observe, we do not find the reason in the preceding verses, nor in John's gospel at all; nor yet in Matthew or Mark, where the same difficulty occurs; but only in Luke—which shows the importance of comparing the gospels together, and supplementing one by the other.

In Luke 23. 2, we find the charge preferred against Jesus. It was threefold, namely, that he (1) "perverted the nation," (2) opposed the payment of tribute, (3) called himself king. The second accusation was directly false, as we know; the first and third were false in the sense intended by the accusers, but true in another sense; for he did seek to *turn* the people, only this was *conversion*, not *perversion*—and he did claim to be the King of the Jews, aye, of men generally. But we have only to do now with this last charge.

Why did the chief priests make this charge at all? It was enough to make Pilate suspicious

of them, for he well knew they hated the Roman rule, and would only be too glad to have an independent king; and even if they did not like this particular candidate to the throne, it was strange at all events that they should accuse him to the common enemy. But the fact appears to have been that they had not intended to make such a complaint. From John 18. 29, 30, it would seem that they were "taken aback" (as we should say) at having to specify a charge at all. Probably they thought Pilate would just take their word for it that the prisoner ought to die, and give them at once a warrant for his execution. Very likely he had done so before! And when, perhaps struck with the meek and holy face of Jesus, he said, "What accusation bring ye against *this* man?" they had to trump up a charge on the spur of the moment, and tried so to put it as to excite a Roman governor's alarm and wrath.

Considering what Jesus had suffered during the night, first in Gethsemane, and then in the house of Caiaphas, we cannot wonder if Pilate heard with incredulous wonder that such a poor, worn, suffering man could be a claimant to be feared, and asked, with a sort of contemptuous pity, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" In all four Gospels the "thou" is emphatic in the Greek. The question was first asked publicly, (Matthew, Mark, Luke), and Jesus at once "confessed"—"Thou sayest it," being an idiomatic equivalent for "yes." Then the verses of our passage come in between the 14th and 15th verses of Matt. 27, the 5th and 6th of Mark 15, and the 3rd and 4th of Luke 23. Finding that Jesus would give no further answer to the accusations now heaped upon him, Pilate took him in-doors, hoping to get more out of him privately, and then repeated the same question.

There are a good many difficulties in the short conversation that followed, but an attempt at an explanation may here be offered.

The design of Jesus' question, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" seems to have been to warn Pilate against his answers: "If you, the governor, do not know of my being engaged in seditious plots, is it likely that these charges are true?" Pilate replies, in effect, "I am no Jew: I know and care nothing about their wild notions of a coming king. They brought you here: what have you done?" He never dreamed that the poor prisoner before him was seriously going to claim