

preparation. The meeting ought to be varied by praise, Bible reading, testimony, fellowship, experience, etc. Long prayers were wearisome and indefinite. Dirgeful music, instead of vigorous, joyful, inspiring strains, made prayer meetings dismal.

Rev. Mr. Milligan spoke on the importance of preparation.

Mr. Roger referred to the undesirableness of having a preaching meeting instead of a prayer meeting. The minister should not occupy much of the time, not more than the half; that the meeting should be thrown open, and the people present taught to regard it as their meeting, that they were responsible for it and that if they did not discharge their duty the meeting would be closed.

Mr. Parsons gave some facts from his own experience which led him to change the subject on which he had made preparation. He thought the highest preparation was that of the closet. Every brother must be guided by his own special circumstances.

*Tuesday Afternoon.*—Mr. W. B. McMurrin presided. After devotional exercises Rev. R. McKay, Scarborough, spoke upon "The Development of a Missionary Spirit among the Young." He suggested the education of the young in this department systematically with the help of maps, books, etc., the cultivation of a missionary spirit, suitable literature, but more especially by seeking the help of the Holy Spirit, and the development of a spirit of Christian liberality, by encouraging and fostering it.

The subject was also spoken on by Rev. Dr. Wardrope, Mr. Parsons, Mr. Rodgers, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Meikle, Mr. McIntyre, and others chiefly enlarging upon and illustrating the suggestions already made.

After praise and prayer the Conference listened to an exceedingly interesting and impressive address by Mr. Parsons on "The Spirit's Power in the Preaching and the Hearing of the Word," which was brought before the meeting by Mr. Parsons. The gist of the subject came out in the question: "By what way shall the power of the Holy Spirit be utilized by every preacher in his act of preaching and by every hearer in his hearing?" He remarked: First, that the Holy Spirit prepares both the preacher and hearer, the one for preaching and the other for hearing. He directs the preacher in selecting texts, and in the treatment of them. Take the hearer—there is a preparation of him by the Spirit for hearing. He prays for his pastor. Second, He anoints the preacher while preaching—which anointing is the additional power promised by the Holy Spirit when engaged in speaking. Illustrations of this were given. Third, He produces in the believer co-working intercession while hearing. Such power of the Spirit deserves to be recognized and will be recognized. Fourth, He seals the truth on the heart of the unbeliever through the faith of both the hearer and preacher. Fifth, He sanctifies both preacher and hearer in this use of His Word.

Principal Grant next addressed the Conference on "How to enlist Church members in Christian work?" He said the persons to be enlisted are mentioned. Church members, who are they? Our children are members of the Church, and it is proper to employ them in Christian work, but I suppose what is primarily meant is members in full communion. Who are the parties to do the enlisting? They are not specified, but I may assume that the pastors of congregations are chiefly meant, and not so much the pastors individually, but the Kirk session as a body, that is the Minister, Elders and Deacons, where there are Deacons. What is the Christian work that is referred to here? For it is not specified, and it is much more difficult to do so than to specify the persons to enlist or those to be enlisted. All work is Christian or un-Christian according to the spirit in which it is done. There are special temptations besetting every work and against which the Christian should be on his guard. The pastor must give his people sound views of the nature of their duties. His one great thought and prayer should be that his people should be alive to God through Jesus Christ. There is, however, special Christian work to which the Church as an organization is pledged, and it is to this that the Conference had reference. The Church is pledged to the great work, which the Master entrusted to her, the conversion of the world, the disciplining of all nations, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded. The minister in his official capacity, must have clear, distinct views as to what is needed in his own particular field, and also what his people are best fitted for. Bible and tract distribution are needed in some places,

but not very generally in our congregations. Visiting the poor may not be needed in some districts, for, thanks be to God, we have comparatively few poor. So of visiting the sick, the minister should take the schemes of the Church in actual organization. He should know what the Home Missions are and what the Foreign Missions are, the names of the Home missionaries and those of the Foreign missionaries, and then what proportion should be raised among his own people. Then let him engage in any other work to which he is called of God. He must deal with individuals. Let him begin with his own session and get each member to do something—each deacon, each member of his Sunday school. Let him deal individually with those who come to speak with him when proposing to come to the communion table of the Lord's Supper for the first time.]

A resolution, expressing high appreciation of the Conference and desire for its repetition, was submitted by Rev. Mr. Milligan, seconded by Rev. John Smith, and adopted; and the benediction concluded the proceedings.

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

### INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

#### LESSON XX.

May 20,  
1883.]

HEROD AND PETER.

[Acts xii.  
1-17.]

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him."—Ps. xxxiv. 7.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—God's servants are kept by His hand.

CONNECTION.—Herod Agrippa, reigning at first over some of the adjoining provinces, had also Judea and Samaria added to his kingdom by the new emperor, Claudius. Claudius began to reign A.D. 41, and Herod died in 44; so he could only have reigned over Judea some three years. He loved luxury, and courted popularity. The story changes from Antioch and the spreading of the Gospel, to Jerusalem and the troubles of the Church there.

NOTES.—Herod: no less than seven Herods are mentioned in this New Testament. (1) *Herod the Great*, son of Antipater and Cypros; made king of Galilee by his father, and king of Judea by Antony; he ordered the murder of the infants (Matt. ii. 16, 18). He was married to ten wives, all of whom bore him children, and nearly all of whom became victims to his dislike. He died B.C. 4. (2) *Herod Antipas*, son of Herod the Great and Malthace, tetrarch of Galilee. He conspired with Herodius, his brother's wife, and married her; was reproved by John Baptist; imprisoned John, and afterwards put him to death; Pilate sent Jesus to this Herod (Luke xxiii. 12); he was banished to Gaul A.D. 38. (3) *Herod Archelaus*, younger brother of Antipas, succeeded Herod the Great in the reign over Judea. Because of this, Joseph returned from Egypt with the infant Jesus to Galilee instead of Bethlehem. (4) *Herod Philip I.*, son of Herod the Great and Mananne II.; he was the husband of Herodias, who left him for Antipas, and father of Salome, who danced before Herod Antipas. (5) *Herod Philip II.*, son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra; he was tetrarch over Trachonitis (Luke iii. 1) and other small provinces; he married Salome, daughter of Philip I., and reigned thirty-seven years. (6) *Herod Agrippa I.*, son of Aristobolus and Berenice, and grandson of Herod the Great; companion in childhood with Claudius; he was a brother of Herodias, wife of Antipas and of Philip I.; he is the Herod of Acts xii., which contains the current lesson; he was brought up in Rome; compelled several times to flee for his debts and crimes; imprisoned by Tiberius; released by Caligula, from whom he received the tetrarchy of Philip; was made consul; possessed, in A.D. 41, the entire kingdom of "Herod the Great," put to death James; imprisoned Peter, and soon after died. (7) *Herod Agrippa II.*, son of Agrippa I. and Cypros; it was before this Herod and his sister Berenice that Paul made his defence, and earnestly "persuaded him to be a Christian" (Acts xxvi); he was intimate with Festus; also with Josephus; and was the last Jewish prince of the Herodian line. He died in Rome in A.D. 100. James: one of the twelve; one of the favoured three, and probably their leader till his death, John with James, sons of Zebedee, fishermen called to the apostleship; author of five books in the New Testament, lived to be 100 years old. Peter. (See preceding lessons.) *Four Quaternions* (*quaternion* means four): sixteen soldiers, in four companies of four soldiers each. The Romans divided the night into four watches, four soldiers being on guard for three hours at a time. Two of the four the prisoner was chained; the other two kept watch before the doors of the prison, forming, as *Alford* thinks, the first and second guards. (See below, v. 10.) Mary: unknown except as the sister of Barnabas, and mother of *John Mark*, author of the Gospel of Mark, the subject of Paul and Barnabas' contention (Acts xv. 37-40); Paul and Mark were afterwards friends (Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11). Rhoda: nothing is known of this maid save what is here recorded; she was probably a servant in Mary's household.

I. PETER'S IMPRISONMENT.—Ver. 1.—Herod the King: Only for some three years was there a "King" in Judea since the death of the first Herod; and none afterward. This Herod was a grandson of Herod the Great and of Mariamne (who was of the line of the Maccabees), and would be more acceptable to the Jews than any others of his family. To vex certain of the Church: wish-

ing to gain the favour of the Jews, he persecuted the Christians—probably had them arrested and beaten.

Ver. 2.—Killed James, the brother of John. Jesus called them "Sons of Thunder," and likely James was very bold and outspoken. Perhaps he often referred, as Peter did (2 Pet. i. 17-18), to the Divine glory on the Mount, and this would be treated as blasphemy. (Acts vii. 55-58.) Some specific charge was brought against him which was not brought against the others. The other James (author of the Epistle, brother of our Lord) is often afterward mentioned. With the sword: not a Jewish mode of execution. We judge it was Herod himself, rather than the Council, who condemned him.

Ver. 3.—Proceeded further to take Peter: this was pleasing to the Jews, and so he proceeds further. Just like sin, always! Do one wrong thing, and it leads and draws toward more. Days of unleavened bread: these things took place at the Passover season, in Spring.

Ver. 4. Four Quaternions: four companies of four each guarded the prisoner in turn. After Easter (*Revision*, "after the Passover"), the Rulers could postpone their judicial murders till after the holy convocation (Lev. xxiii. 8), or hurry them on before (John xix. 31-34), but refused to give God their hearts!

Ver. 5. Prayer... without ceasing: men have never yet fully realized how much God will do in answer to prayer. Even these brethren, as we shall see, had not as much faith as they should.

II. PETER'S DELIVERANCE.—Ver. 6.—The same night: the last night of the feast, just before Herod intended to bring him up for condemnation and execution. Between two soldiers bound: two of the quaternions were manacled to him (or he to them), and two were on guard outside.

Ver. 7.—The Angel of the Lord (*Revision*, "an angel") are not God's angels always near us, though we see them not? (2 Kings, vi. 15-17.) Raised him up (*Revision*, "awoke him"): the angel roused him from sleep. Perhaps Peter thought it the summons to execution. Chains fell off: he arose unbound; and without awakening the soldiers beside him.

Ver. 8.—Gird thyself, etc.: the angel told him to dress himself and follow him. God demands the use of our faculties.

Ver. 9.—Thought he saw a vision: perhaps to everyone there comes at times a feeling of unreality—things all seem in a dream, and then the feeling passes off again. So with Peter.

Ver. 10.—First and second ward: "Passing through a first ward, and a second."—Rotherham's *Tregelles*. Not keepers, but compartments or courts of the prison; each with a sentinel. The iron gate: the great iron-plated and iron fastened gate opened by God's power, and no noise or alarm was made. Passed on through one street: having led him some distance from the gate of the prison, the angel left him.

Ver. 11.—When Peter was come to himself: only now did he realize that it was all true, and not a dream. The Lord hath sent his angel: now he knew God had delivered him by a miracle. How often are we delivered—from spiritual as well as bodily danger—and how often fail to see God's great hand in it?

Ver. 12.—Came to the house of Mary: Mark's mother is not elsewhere mentioned. She was aunt to Barnabas. (Col. iv. 10, *Revision*.) Many... praying: no doubt spending the whole night thus. In 1630, on a Sabbath, at the Kirk of Shotts, in Scotland, hundreds were converted on the spot, and it came to be known afterward that John Livingstone, the young man who preached, had, with one or two more, spent the whole preceding night in an agony of prayer!

Ver. 13.—A damsel came to hear: their doors did not communicate direct with the street, as ours. And this was far in the night, and they might think it enemies come to arrest them. Rhoda: "rose", a beautiful name; ever-fragrant!

Ver. 14.—She knew Peter's voice: through all time and change, no mark of identity remains with us like the voice!

Ver. 15.—They said... thou art mad: they had, after all, but slight faith their prayers would be heard. Perhaps they had formerly too much depended on the strong faith of James and Peter, and now felt weak and desponding without them. She constantly affirmed: well done, Rhoda! She knew Peter was there; she knew their prayers were heard! It is his angel: either a spirit (Matt. xiv. 26), or more likely a guardian angel of Peter (Matt. viii. 16); so they thought but could not believe it was Peter, in his own body.

Ver. 16.—Continued Knocking: dangerous to be on the street, an escaped prisoner. They were astonished: God had answered all their prayers, and was better to them than their fears!

Ver. 17.—Beckoning... to hold their peace: he calmed them and told them how he had been delivered. Show these things unto James: this was "James the less," from henceforth apparently the leader of the Church at Jerusalem. The other apostles travelled much; James, apparently, not at all. Went into another place: we infer that Peter often went to this house—perhaps lived there, and, not judging it a safe place, hid somewhere else; or escaped for a time from Jerusalem.

#### PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. Christian conquered when he fought Apollyon with the weapon of "All-prayer." (See Bunyan.)
2. Killing an apostle does not destroy the message sent to sinners!
3. Herod only gave Peter a few days to live; he was within a few days of his own death, ver. 23.
4. Unceasing prayer will be answered in some way! Luke xviii. 1, 7, 8.
5. Christ's voice in the soul is recognized by the true believer, ver. 14.
6. The Lord delivers us out of many prisons and captivities. Has he yet delivered me?