

## FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

## International S. S. Lesson.

## LESSON I.—JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED.—JAN. 6.

Mark vi : 17-29.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”—Matt. x. 28.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Courage in the Right.

ANALYSIS.—A **C**ourageous **R**ueful **R**ewardly **R**esolution, v. 17-20.  
Request, v. 21-25.  
Ruler, v. 26-29.

TIME AND PLACE.—John the Baptist was imprisoned in the castle of Machaerus at the southern extremity of Peraea, nine miles east of the northern end of the Dead Sea, during March or April A.D. 28; a year later he was beheaded.

A COURAGEOUS REBUKE, v. 17-20.—Herod Antipas is a son of Herod the Great, a man who professed to be a Sadducee and unbeliever in the future life and resurrection, but who, notwithstanding this, hearing of Christ's preaching and miracles trembled lest it were John, whom he had murdered, risen from the dead. The mention of this fear on the part of Herod gives occasion for the account of the Baptist's martyrdom. The Galilean ruler had married a daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia Petrea; but becoming acquainted with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife in Rome, he sent his wife home, and married Herodias while Philip was still living. To this iniquity in high places John could neither remain blind nor silent; so before Herod in person and the people over whom he ruled, in no measured terms did he denounce the sin. It was indeed courageous for a poor Jew, having neither the influence of wealth nor connection, thus to oppose his voice to the absolute will of an unprincipled despot; but John felt that he could not rebuke the democracy for sin, and cringe to the license of the aristocracy; he felt that the standard of a nation's morality depended greatly upon the example of those who ruled over it; he saw the impending disaster threatened by an invasion on the part of the insulted Aretas, and sought, like a true patriot, to prevent the inevitable bloodshed and distress. Yet it was all unavailing. Herod feared John, and for some time preserved him from the plottings of Herodias, apparently fascinated by his courageous character; but while he trembled in perplexity as to what he should do, his evil nature conquered and he surrendered to his passion.

A CRUEL REQUEST, v. 21-25.—But with bitter hatred Herodias watched her opportunity, and when a convenient day was come, namely Herod's birthday on which he had arranged for a feast, she proceeded to put into execution her carefully thought out plans for revenge upon the Baptist. Instructing her own daughter Salome, she sent her in to dance before the gathering of drunken libertines, an act of shamelessness which leads the inspired penman to use the reflexive pronoun “herself,” after the name of Herodias indicating indignant surprise, (see v. 22 R.V.) The dancing at such feasts was as a rule exceedingly immoral, and always performed by professional dancing girls; so low, however, had Herodias fallen that to gain her end she exposed her own child to all the shame and sin of such a performance. Herod and his company excited by wines and high feeding were pleased by the dancing, and the maudlin monarch in drunken generosity offered to the dancer anything she might ask, even to the half of his kingdom. For such a promise Herodias had been waiting, and close at hand she instructed Salome to ask for the head of her noble enemy, the captive John. With haste Salome returned to the banquet hall and preferred the horrible request. “I will that thou give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist.” She asked for it immediately, lest Herod sobering should repent his promise.

A COWARDLY RULER, v. 26-29.—And Herod was sorry. Not repentant, but troubled lest the act should disaffect his people in the conflict with Aretas. As a matter of fact Aretas did defeat him with great slaughter. But he was afraid after having given oath before so large a company, to draw back lest they should scorn him; so he yielded again to his weakness, and ordered an executioner to accomplish the deed. It is a horrible picture that rises before us. A young girl bearing in her delicate hands a dish, surmounted by the ghastly head of the martyred prophet; an older woman receiving it from her with unconcealed delight. We shudder. How low the devil drags his victims! With sad hearts came the Baptists disciples, and taking the poor mutilated body laid it in a tomb; then they went and told Jesus.

NOTES ON THE TEXT.—V. 20. *Observed him*,—R.V. “Kept him safe.” *Did many things*,—R.V. “was much perplexed.” V. 21. *A convenient day*,—For Herodias' purpose. V. 22. *Daughter*,—Salome, by Philip. Said Herodias—R.V. “Herodias herself.” V. 25. *By-and-by*,—R.V. “Forthwith.”

## Application and Illustration.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

BE COURAGEOUS FOR THE RIGHT, V. 18.—It is easy to stand up for the right when the majority is with you, but when you stand alone only the might of God can make you faithful. John denounced sin in high places, because he believed in holiness in higher places, and felt that his loyalty to God demanded his firm opposition to all iniquity were it found in the peasant's hut or the king's palace. There are some so-called ministers to-day whose mouths are shut on the liquor question, because their richest church members are distillers; we need more men like John the Baptist of A.D. 29, and Dr. Parkhurst of A.D. 1894. God grant you and I, dear reader, so to live that sin may be condemned by our daily walk and conversation.

LEARN THE EVIL OF DANCING, V. 22.—The most severe indictment possible against the dance is simply history. Usually, however, it is history that has been suppressed. If police court judges chose to lecture on dancing, they could open the eyes of some people. Every pure young man or woman that begins to dance puts himself in line with terrible precedents.—*Golden Rule*.

BE CAREFUL HOW I MADE PROMISES, V. 23.—The question has often been asked. Would Herod have done right to break his oath to Salome? The answer is yes. No power in the universe can ever make it right to do wrong, and the murder of John was most certainly wrong. It is not wrong then to violate an oath? Not if the oath were in itself wrong. The making of such an oath is the first sin, and the keeping of it is the second. Thus Shakespeare aptly says.—

“It is a great sin to swear unto a sin;  
But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.  
Who can be bound by any solemn oath  
To do a murderous deed?”—Henry VI. V. 1.

GATHERED GOLD.—Spurgeon said he always had an uneasy sensation around the neck when he heard of a public ball.

We easy going Christians need to take to heart Christ's, “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.”

The mother often decides the fate of her children. They say to her, “What shall we ask?” And the mothers answer leads to heaven or hell.

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths,  
In feeling, not in figures on a dial. He most lives  
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.—Bailey.

## CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

## Daily Readings.

First Day—For missions—Matt. ix. 32-38.

Second Day—For country—1 Sam. xii. 16-24.

Third Day—For yourselves—Luke xviii. 9-14.

Fourth Day—For friends—Job xlii. 1-10.

Fifth Day—For needs—Mark xi. 20-26.

Sixth Day—For power—Acts iv. 29-35.

Seventh Day—THE WEEK OF PRAYER: WHAT SHALL IT MEAN TO US?—2 Chron. vi. 18-21, 29-33; vii. 1-3.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, JAN. 6.—“The Week of Prayer; what shall it mean to us? 2 Chron. vi. 18-21, 29-33; vii. 1-3. We have entered the portals of another year; already the door is fast closed behind us, we can never go back. How better can we face the future than in the spirit of prayer? What nobler, sweeter word can be inscribed on this final page of old Times' new volume, than the world-wide cry, “Our Father?” It is a grand thought that inspires our hearts, as on the wings of imagination we circle the globe and find in every land knees bent in pleading to the same Saviour, hearts all bound in one grand whole by the same indwelling Spirit. We pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” and in that earnest prayer lose sight of all dividing lines, and only feel the current of Divine electricity that thrills from heart to heart the wondrous message “ONE IS OUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL WE ARE BROTHERS!”

Under such happy auspices 1895 is well begun. Continued in the same true spirit it will be marked by greater progress in the cause of Christ, than any that have joined the past. Let us be one in praying for more faith, for greater love, for fuller consecration, for increase of power, for the adding of souls.

Father of all to-day we kneel  
In prayer before Thy throne;  
One people we in hope and love,  
All we in service one.

Though lines of creed may separate,  
Though land and sea may part,  
To-day one prayer shall make us one  
In Christ our Master's heart.

## Work for the New Year.

“Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” It may not be good exegesis to apply this to the passing of '94, and the coming of '95, and yet it just seems to sum up the thoughts I want to impress upon you. With the New Year come new responsibilities, new opportunities, new privileges, all greater than any that have preceded them? A little personal retrospect, a little study of the scars our “experience” has so often left upon us, will be helpful in making a reply. Such a survey should lead us to one conclusion, “I am helpless. The sooner I give up myself the better.” If we get to that point, and mean what we say, and act upon what we mean, the prospects are bright for a year of successful Endeavor. The next step of course is “Christ is all sufficient. He has promised to be my life. Henceforth I live no longer, but Christ lives in me.” On that ground we are ready for all that the New Year may bring forth. Now what are the possibilities of 1895? Look around you. Do you see a horizon to them? It is the limit of your faith. God can extend that horizon just as far as your belief in His power will permit Him, and the coming year will be fruitful of good to the measure of your prayerful expectations. May I ask you to include within your belief for 1895, a great spiritual awakening in our churches, a deepening of spiritual life among our Endeavorers, a drawing together in closer union of those who love Christ for service, a spreading enthusiasm in missions, and a world wide preparation for the coming again of Jesus?