



LESSON VI.—MAY 11, 1902.

Peter Delivered From Prison

Acts xii., 1-19. Commit to memory vs. 5-7.

Golden Text.

'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them.' Ps. xxxiv., 7.

Home Readings.

Monday, May 5.—Acts xii., 1-10.
 Tuesday, May 6.—Acts xii., 11-19.
 Wednesday, May 7.—Matt. xviii., 15-20.
 Thursday, May 8.—Ps. xxxiii., 10-22.
 Friday, May 9.—Dan. vi., 15-23.
 Saturday, May 10.—II. Cor. i., 1-12.
 Sunday, May 11.—Ps xxxiv., 1-10.

Lesson Text.

(1) Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. (2) And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. (3) And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) (4) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. (5) Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. (6) And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. (7) And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. (8) And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. (9) And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

Suggestions.

Who was this Herod that stretched forth his hands to afflict certain of the church? The Herods were all hated by the Jews as foreigners placed over them by the Roman government. But this one 'Herod Agrippa the first,' was half a Jew, his mother being descended from the celebrated Jewish family of the Maccabees. He tried to get popularity among the Jews by posing as one of them, though he 'could play the heathen at Caesarea with as much skill as he could play the Pharisee at Jerusalem' (Farrar).

Who was James the brother of John? He was one of the three who had been with Jesus at times when even the other apostles were not permitted to be near him, on the mount of transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane. James and John were sons of a fisherman named Zebedee. They were called Boanerges, or the sons of thunder, on account of the vehemence of their natural dispositions. John became the apostle of love. James, perhaps, still full of the fierceness of youth, was the first of the apostles to rejoin their Master in heaven, as John was the latest. Doubtless Herod thought he was striking at the roots of the church in killing such a prominent man. The stoning of Stephen had been an illegal act of violence on the part of the Jews, but Herod could exercise his power in this way as much as he pleased. He chose to attack the principal leaders first, thinking this the surest way to exterminate the society and—what he was more concerned about—to please the Jews.

Who was Peter? Peter had been the leader and spokesman of the twelve. He had received a special charge from Christ that he should tend his flock. Perhaps he

was at this time regarded as the most aggressive Christian leader, though we find 'James the Lord's brother' (not one of the original twelve apostles) apparently the nominal head of the Jerusalem church (see verse 17). Peter was now thrown into prison for the second time (see Acts v., 17-23), and for the second time was mysteriously brought out from behind prison doors.

Who was 'the angel?' The Revised version says 'an angel,' not a revelation of the divine presence, but some messenger from God. Wind and lightning are his messengers (Ps. civ., 4). An earthquake was his messenger to loosen the chains of Paul and Silas in a European dungeon (Acts xvi., 26). This was a messenger of a different kind, but a very effective one. Peter was under the impression that he was merely seeing a vision, what would be called nowadays 'a subjective apparition.' But he realized that that was not the case when he found himself walking down the open street. Read the rest of the chapter and see how he was welcomed back by the Christians, and what became of the hypocritical tyrant Herod.

Many miracles had before this time been wrought by the apostles (Acts v., 12), and perhaps by other individuals (I. Cor. xii., 28), but this is a striking instance of a special answer granted to the united prayer of a number of believers, some of them, no doubt, ignorant and weak in faith, but all earnestly desiring that God would deliver Peter. They probably thought that Peter would be set free, in answer to their prayer, at his trial, which would be after the Passover feast. They were full of joy and amazement when God sent the answer 'while they were yet speaking.'

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, May 11.—Topic—Jesus the Living Bread. John vi., 22-35; 47-58.

Junior C. E. Topic.**GREAT HEART.**

Mon., May 5.—Kind words. Job. xvi., 5.
 Tues., May 6.—Comfort. Job. xxii., 29.
 Wed., May 7.—Helpfulness. Lev. xix., 18.
 Thu., May 8.—Cheer. Prov. xii., 25.
 Fri., May 9.—Humility. John xiii., 14.
 Sat., May 10.—Courage. II. Chron. xix., 11.
 Sun., May 11.—Topic—Pilgrim's progress. V. Great Heart and how to be one. Heb. xiii., 20, 21.

Best Sunday-School Teachers

It is a pity that more born teachers do not find their way into our Sunday-schools. As it is a purely voluntary office, the willingness to undertake it is the only eligibility required, yet it is a field where capability tells in as great a degree as in any occupation. 'I wish I could go to Helen's Sunday-school,' sighed a little girl the other day. 'Her teacher has them do things. My teacher just lets us read verses all around; then she talks.' Further inquiry revealed that Helen's teacher had many and varied schemes to keep up the class interest and attendance, simple but efficient. Children are susceptible to the same methods of teaching in the church as in the secular schools, but this is frequently overlooked. The Sunday-school is more important to-day than when it was first instituted. The Bible study got there is all, alas! that is ever got by many persons, and whether one is 'liberal' or not, in latter life it is conceded that a knowledge of the Scriptures is a valuable element of an education. In some private schools the study of sacred history comes in the regular course, and is pursued on the same plan as that of arithmetic or geography.—New York 'Times.'

Hints to Teachers.

A teacher should never attempt to teach when there is actual disorder in the class. Only one thing can be well done at a time. A well-prepared lesson should command the respect of every one, and a conscientious teacher has a right to expect this. Often the teacher is at fault. The scholar soon learns that no attention will be given to his indifference and what began in indifference often ends in utter disregard and disrespect. What sight is so pitiable as to see a teacher with all control forfeited trying to stem the tide of increasing disorder.

Special Clubbing Offer, 'World Wide' and 'Northern Messenger,' \$1.00.

**Longfellow and Temperance.**

In 1833 the Portland Young Men's Temperance Society was organized; the pledge included total abstinence from ardent spirits, but did not include the milder drinks, although Neal Dow and a few others endeavored to have it thus strengthened. Henry W. Longfellow and his brother Stephen were schoolmates of Neal Dow at the Portland Academy. While the tastes of the great poet did not lead him in the ways of a reformer, it is interesting to know that he was a member of the Portland Young Men's Temperance Society, and to recall that later in life he wrote:—

'Drink, drink,
 And thy soul shall sink
 Down into the dark abyss,
 Into the infinite abyss
 From which no plummet nor rope
 Ever drew up the silver sand of hope.'

'Its perfume is the breath
 Of the angel of death,
 And the light that within it lies
 Is the flash of his evil eyes.'

—Mrs L. M. N. Stevens, in 'The Christian Endeavor World.'

Heart's Blood.

To hold the glass up to the light, to admire its beauty of color, to see it-foam in the champagne glass, sparkling in the light with diamond-like beauty to sip it, not to quench thirst but to enjoy its delicate flavor—this seems so innocent, so harmless, nay, even so beautiful and elevating, such a source of pleasant and even profitable companionship! I said this once—repeating what a young man had said to me—to a friend, who made answer: 'When I think what that same wine has done, its color is like the blood-red color on a knife that had been plunged into my brother's heart!'—Lyman Abbott, D.D.

Cigarettes.

A careful reader of New York papers reports that in little over a year he found the following results 'brought home' to cigarette smoking:—30 driven insane, 12 led to become robbers, 6 suicides, 6 murders, 3 poisoned, 2 convulsions, 1 made blind. The names of a number of murderers are given. Cigarette smoking appear to be more general than ever. The sensible boy who is determined 'to be a man' will avoid cigarettes and tobacco in every form.

Why Abstain?**I.—For Our Own Sake.**

1. The health of your body.
2. The purity of your moral character.
3. The holiness of your religious life.

II.—For the Sake of Others.

1. That the young may not be tempted.
2. That the weak may not stumble.
3. That the fallen may be raised up.
4. That the falling may be helped to stand.
5. That none may err through your drinking.—Temperance Record.

The dictum of science on the subject of moderate drinking is by no means ambiguous. Science cannot support the plea that alcohol is a harmless pleasant beverage. It cannot support the plea of the moderate drinker that alcohol is an aid to health. But it does support the position of the total abstainer with an emphasis which it is culpable to disregard. Science shows how the abstainer can do more and better work than the moderate drinker. Science shows how the abstainer lives longer and is healthier than the moderate drinker. Science, in short, shows that the abstainer lives the normal life while the moderate drinker lives the abnormal.—Thomas Easton, M.D., in 'Health.'