

cessity of going before the Roman governo whom they hated.

But necessity knows no law; they must go; and they must go with a charge against Jesus. For the charge see Luke xxviii. : 2. It is three-fold. Pilate regards only the last part of it, viz., that which his accusers say about his being a king.

V. 33.—Pilate had dealt with Christ's accusers (vs. 23-32), outside the judgment hall, because they would not go in. Now he deals directly with Jesus Himself, and that he may be the more free to speak with and question Him he takes Him into the judgment hall, out of the sight and hearing of those that were without. There he puts the question "Art thou the king of the Jews."

V. 34.—Christ wants to know whether Pilate is merely repeating a question that he has heard, or whether he is asking for his own information. It seems as if Jesus, to whom the secrets of all hearts are known, perceived down deep in the soul of Pilate an indistinct longing after another king and another kingdom than as yet he knew anything of. And he would have Pilate give expression to it. But no, whatever he feels, Pilate will make no acknowledgments. His pride is touched, and so he asks in reply, "Am I a Jew." *Thine own nation, &c.*

V. 36.—Jesus proceeds to answer Pilate and to let him know that He is a King, that He has a kingdom, but His kingdom is not of this world.

V. 37.—Pilate is perplexed. He cannot understand Christ's words. Hence he asks again, "Art Thou a king then, art Thou really a king, or in what sense art Thou a king." Christ's answer is, "Thou sayest, &c., or it is as thou sayest, I am a king. *"To this end was I born. . . . to bear witness unto the truth."* At first sight this seems to be aside from the point in hand, but when the position and character of Pilate are taken into account it will be seen that it is a most appropriate answer. As a Roman, and an educated Roman, Pilate knew that the great question that the different schools and sects tried to answer was, "What is truth." Now when Jesus here says that He came expressly to bear witness to the truth, and that every one that is of the truth hears His voice, He claims to know all about the matter, He claims to be king in this realm. He speaks with authority. Truth is His; He is the truth; and by the truth he conquers and reigns. He is king in the moral and spiritual world.

V. 38.—Whether Pilate understands Christ fully or not; or is benefited personally by the interview or not, he is convinced of one thing, and that is, that Christ's kingdom will never interfere with Caesar's. He may rule as a king in His own realm. Pilate sees nothing in Him or His words to condemn.

LESSONS.

- (1.) Christ is a king.
- (2.) His kingdom is to be advanced by the truth. Therefore let us teach truth, the truth, and nothing but the truth.

FOURTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Jesus on the Cross, John xix. 25-30. Golden Text, Isaiah liii. 6.*

Acting from policy and not from conviction and principle Pilate delivered up Jesus to be crucified. Whereupon the Jews seized him and led him away to Calvary. For an account of their brutal conduct see Matt. xxvii. 27-33. A great company of people (sympathizers) followed Jesus as He went to the cross, see Luke xxiii. 27-33. At length the place is reached. There stands the Saviour, His body all lacerated and torn, weak and exhausted, meek as a peaceful harmless lamb. The cross is ready, Jesus has borne it o. His own shoulders; now He is to be lifted up on it, nailed to it. It is done. Jesus is on the cross. He is crucified, and that between two thieves. Our lesson restricts us to a few facts in connection with the crucifixion. 1st. The onlookers, or at least a few of the onlookers, for there was a multitude looking on. But these were the most deeply interested spectators; the women who followed Jesus, the three Marys, some say four, foremost among whom was Mary, the mother of Jesus. They were faithful to the last. Looking down Jesus sees His mother and John stand by, (for John was the disciple whom He loved) and says, "Woman behold thy son!" Whereupon John takes her away to his own home.

"This was an honor put upon John and a testimony both to his prudence and to his fidelity."—Henry.

Jesus has been on the cross for some hours. He knows that the end draws nigh, that the period of his passion is about to close. "Now with the presentiment of victory his thirst makes itself felt."—Lange. The idea is that Christ was so absorbed with His sufferings (soul sufferings) that He did not feel the dreadful thirst, that always torments the crucified; but now when they are closing He feels the thirst; hence His cry.

Vs. 29-30.—The soldiers gave him some of the beverage which they are wont to drink, sour wine, or vinegar and water. They saturate a sponge with it and put it to His lips and He drinks; and then He dies, exclaiming as He dies, "It is finished." Grand utterance! finished the work that the Father gave Him to do—finished the work that He undertook, finished for ever the work of our salvation.

LESSONS.

- (1.) There were witnesses of Christ's death—many witnesses. It is a well attested fact that Jesus died.
- (2.) Women behold Christ's death. They were and still are among the most faithful of Christ's followers.
- (3.) Christ when dying providing for His mother, teaches us to provide for those who are near and dear to us.
- (4.) In all His sufferings Christ fulfilled the Scriptures.
- (5.) By dying Christ conquered. 'Twas as He gave up the ghost that He finished His work and overthrew Satan.