

Commissioners were heard from the session and congregation, each of whom spoke in high terms of the esteem in which Mr. Ball was held, of his ability and usefulness as a pastor, of the prosperity of the congregation since he came to it, and of the good influence exercised by himself and Mrs. Ball over the young. After full and careful deliberation the Presbytery came to the resolution that they were under the necessity to accede to Mr. Ball's own earnest request although they did so with great regret; but nevertheless delayed final action till next ordinary meeting. The Presbytery next proceeded to consider the resignation by Mr. Bryant of his pastoral oversight of the congregations of Glenallan and Hollin. Mr. Bryant and commissioners were heard. After reasoning, in the course of which testimony was borne to the zeal and efficiency of Mr. Bryant by the members of the court, and some went so far as to propose that he be continued in his present charge, it was agreed that, without expressing any opinion as to his reasons, but at the same time expressing regret at parting with their brother, they accept his resignation. Mr. Fisher was appointed to preach the pulpit vacant on the 29th inst., and Mr. Middlemiss, Moderator of Session, during the vacancy. A petition was presented from the congregation of Hespeler asking that the portion of Mr. Haugh's services now given to Preston should be transferred to Hespeler so that they might have evening service, and promising \$200 in addition to the salary they already pay. The Presbytery then adjourned.

PRESBYTERY OF BARRIE.—This Presbytery met at Barrie on Tuesday, the 26th September. Present, nineteen ministers and twelve elders. The Rev. Mr. McPherson, of Dunkeld, a member of the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, was present and invited to sit with the Presbytery, as was also Rev. Mr. Crombie, formerly of the China Inland Mission. Mr. McPherson presented a commission authorizing him to present the fraternal greetings of his Committee, and to gather during his visit to this country such information as might be serviceable to it. The clerk was directed to notify treasurers of the rule in the Book of Forms to provide for payment of expenses of ministers and elders in attendance upon the Church Courts. A report was presented from Bracebridge that steps were being taken for the erection of a manse. The Presbytery cordially agreed to authorize Rev. A. Findlay to solicit aid from friends of the Church, and to adopt measures for securing contributions from the congregations of the bounds. The affairs of the Tecumseth and Adjala congregations were considered. The supply of the pulpit was left with the Session, and the Moderator empowered to moderate in a call when desired. There were numerous reports read in connection with the Home Mission work of the Presbytery, showing the condition of the vacant congregations and mission stations, the work done by missionaries during summer, and various appointments fulfilled by members of Presbytery in the mission fields. The Rev. Mr. McPherson expressed his interest in the Presbytery's work, and on withdrawing received its thanks and good wishes conveyed by the Moderator. Petitions were received from the Minesing stations for the ordination of Mr. John Geddes, who as a licentiate has been labouring among them for the past nine months. It was agreed to grant the petitions, and to meet at Minesing on Wednesday, 11th October, for the trials and examination of Mr. Geddes, and for his ordination, should the trial be sustained. Mr. Leiper was appointed to preside, Mr. Craw to preach, and Messrs. Rodgers and Gray to address the newly ordained missionary and the congregation respectively. The grants to be asked from the Home Mission Committee were agreed on. It was resolved to divide the supervision of the Muskoka and Parry Sound Mission districts between two ordained missionaries, to be procured for Maganetawan and Huntsville groups, and to ask \$200 for each of the missionaries for this labour; also to invite Rev. E. W. Panton to take charge of Huntsville, and Rev. J. Jamieson, who has laboured for two summers with acceptance in Maganetawan to remain there. It was agreed to obtain ordained missionaries for Waubashene and Parry Sound, and to accept the services of Rev. Messrs. Crombie and Stevenson, with the sanction of the Home Mission Committee. On report of a Committee of Missions among lumbermen it was resolved to continue the work begun last winter. The clerk was directed to certify to their respective colleges sixteen students

who were engaged in mission work during summer. Mr. George Wood, of Mecunoma, was received as a student with a view to the ministry of the Church. Three months' leave from his pulpit was given to the clerk, and arrangements made for doing his Presbytery work in his absence.—R. MOODIE, Pres. Clerk.

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLVI.

Nov. 12,
1882.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

Mark 15:
1-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He is despised and rejected of men."—Isa. 53: 3.

TIME.—Early morning of the day of crucifixion.

PLACE.—Jerusalem; in the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate, Roman Governor of Judea.

PARALLEL.—Matt. 27: 1, 2, 11-26; Luke 23: 1-25; John 18: 28-40; 19: 1.

Notes and Comments.—Ver. 1. "In the morning:" the midnight meeting, as we noted, was irregular. Luke records this meeting more fully. The council passed sentence of death on Jesus, but was powerless to execute it, being subject to the Romans, who reserved to themselves the right to inflict the death penalty; otherwise, Jesus would have suffered the Jewish form of death—stoning; but He was to be crucified as predicted—Ch. 10: 33, 34. "Pilate," the procurator; the sixth in that office, his duties were, principally, to collect the revenues, and, in certain cases, to administer justice; he was a cold, cruel man, see Luke 13: 1; after repeated complaints by the Jews to Rome, he was deposed, banished, and is said to have committed suicide; his part in the death of Christ is mentioned by the historian Tacitus.

Ver. 2. "Asked Him:" there was a private examination, the members of the Sanhedrim would not, as we learn from John, enter the judgment hall, "that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover." REV. and they were intent on murder, the hypocritical formalists. "The king of the Jews," the first accusation; that of blasphemy followed. The Jews wanted to prove Jesus a political criminal. "Thou sayest:" i.e., "yes"—a strong affirmation. It is evident that Pilate did not think there was any danger to the Roman power in the spiritual kingdom which Christ claimed, or he would not have been ready to say, "I find in Him no fault."

Ver. 3. This saying of Pilate only the more deeply stirred the malignity of Christ's enemies, and they heaped accusation upon accusation to force, if possible, a condemnation. The last clause in this verse is omitted by REV.; but Jesus was evidently silent, as the next verse shows.

Ver. 4. "Answerest Thou nothing?" Pilate could not understand how one charged with crimes, the punishment of which was death—sedition and treason (see Luke 13: 1-5)—could remain silent. "Witness against Thee:" REV., "accuse Thee of."

Ver. 5. Still no answer; the patient silence of Jesus is not the least wonderful part of His suffering. "Marvelled:" he was convinced that Jesus was innocent, and he understood the action of the Jews (ver. 10). The silence of our Lord continued until just before the final decision—John 19: 10, 11. Christ is now sent to Herod, examined, mocked, and sent back to Pilate—Luke 23: 6-11.

Ver. 6. "At that feast—released—one prisoner:" no notice of this custom is found outside the Evangelists, but the custom of releasing prisoners at seasons of rejoicing is a very ancient one, and is continued in many countries to this day. Probably it had been granted here from the desire of the Romans to conciliate a vanquished, turbulent people.

Ver. 7, 8. "Barabbas:" lit. "father's son," a common Hebrew name, perhaps, as Bengel says, "longed for, loved, spoiled by his father." "Insurrection—murder:" these were the crimes of Barabbas—Matt. 26: 16; Luke 23: 25. It appears that the first suggestion of releasing a prisoner came from Pilate—John 18: 19, he proposed to release Jesus. "Desire him to do:" it is evident, we think, that here came from the mob the first cry for Barabbas—Luke 23: 18, as a political prisoner they would be favourable to him, however black his crimes.

Ver. 8, 9. The character of Pilate is apparent in this scene—cold, sceptical, cruel, knowing the right thing to do, and yet willing to do the wrong, as he had no particular feelings in the matter, and it was an easy way of gratifying the Jews; not weak in the way of carrying out his purpose when he had formed one, but weak in making expediency the rule of his actions; crooked and cunning as men of expediency are; blundering as they are sometimes sure to do, he placed Jesus, unconcerned, guiltless, as he knew full well, on a level with a murderer, and so gave the mob, incited thereto by the priests, an opportunity of demanding Barabbas, and sending Jesus to death; he had conscience enough to make him unwilling to commit injustice, but not courage or principle enough to face danger or odium for the sake of justice.

Ver. 10. "Knew that for envy:" Pilate was shrewd enough to see that; doubtless he had heard of Jesus and of his popularity, and fully understood that the chief priests and scribes would be glad to get a man so dangerous to their influence among the people out of the way.

Ver. 11. Here probably Pilate received the message from his wife—Matt. 27: 19, while waiting for the decision of the people; in the meantime the chief priests had stirred them up to demand Barabbas, appealing to their prejudices and passions as Jews.

Ver. 12. "What will ye:" Pilate was annoyed at being overreached in his proposal to liberate Jesus, and there is a contemptuous tone in his question, possibly he thought that the popularity of Jesus would cause the crowd to ask for

His release also, which, in the circumstances, Pilate would likely have granted, in addition to that of Barabbas.

Ver. 13, 14. If so, he was soon undeceived, for the cry was instead, "Crucify Him." The release that should have been for Jesus, they demanded for Barabbas, while the punishment the murderer had incurred they would mete out to the innocent one. "What evil" three times Pilate put this question, showing clearly his conviction of the innocence of the accused, but that, and the proposal to scourge Jesus and let Him go, showed also the absence of moral courage in the judge. The only answer is a more violent shout, "Crucify Him:" the mob had become violent, and Pilate feared a tumult, he, therefore, now takes water, washes his hands—Matt. 27: 24, to show by that symbolical action that his judgment acquitted Jesus, and that the responsibility of the deed rested upon the Jews, expressive enough to them, but a miserable subterfuge so far as he personally was concerned—Gal. 6: 5.

Ver. 15. "Pilate willing:" REV., "wishing:" his principal desire now was to appease the tumult, that could only be done by giving up Jesus to be crucified, and so he did it. "Scourged Him:" scourging was usually inflicted before crucifixion. Roman scourging was a fearful punishment. It was retributive justice that the fall of Pilate was due to the accusations of these very men.

HINTS TO TEACHERS.

Prefatory.—The teacher should get into his mind the order of events, as covered by this lesson; it will pay to do so.

Topical Analysis.—(1) The examination before Pilate (vers. 1-5). (2) The offer of release (6-10). (3) The cry for Barabbas (vers. 11-14). (4) Delivered up (ver. 15).

On the *first* topic little need be said, the same thoughts are here which appeared in the last lesson—the bitter hatred of the chief priests, and the silence of Jesus—but there is one thought that may be dwelt upon—the *kingship of Christ*. He declared that He was a king; bring out the character of His rule, the spirituality of His kingdom; who are His subjects; the reward of the loyal and the fate of the disobedient, and leave it with your scholars to see if they are of the kingdom—that kingdom which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

On the *second* topic we see how a heathen ruler bore testimony to the righteousness of Jesus, so Herod, so Judas, so Pilate's wife; while His own countrymen, the officers of religion, accused Him falsely and sought His death, Pilate declares that He is innocent, and endeavours to release Him. Spotless, holy, undefiled, the Lamb of God was led to a cruel death.

On the *third* topic we can show how the choice of Barabbas by the mob, incited thereto by the chief priests, proved the hollowness and insincerity of their accusation against Jesus. They had accused the Saviour of treason, and yet they chose before Him one who had been taken in insurrection—a red-handed murderer. To the crowd Barabbas was a patriot, but the real patriot, He who alone could have saved His country from the horrors that came upon it, was He for whose blood they were clamouring. So to-day, men mistake appearances for reality, reject the true and choose the counterfeit; are taken up with what are called "liberal" views of religion, when they are really the things that are opposed to and would destroy religion altogether. Point out, further, that there is a rejection of Christ and a choice of Barabbas to-day, a deliberate refusing the good and seeking the evil; Barabbas represents the world, its guilt and crimes; and those who love the world better than Christ, refuse to receive Him for the Lord of their hearts, are acting again the part of those murderous Jews. Christ or Barabbas. Which?

On the *fourth* topic, the action of Pilate is the point notice. Convinced of the innocence of Jesus, having declared that conviction again and again, he yet, "to content the people," delivered up Jesus to their hatred and cruelty, an act as base as it was cowardly. He had not hesitated on other occasions to enforce his wishes at the point of the sword, but now, when only the life of one whom even He felt was honourable and excellent, was at stake, he delivered him up to please the people, another instance of how one sin prepares the way and leads on to another. Cruel and tyrannical in his government, oppressive almost beyond endurance, he just threw the life of Jesus to the multitude as a sop to propitiate them; we wonder not that the early Christians had legends of the restless, remorseful life that followed, to be closed by a suicidal death, and that to this day there is a terror associated with a spot named after him—a spot from which the timid and superstitious turn away with trembling. Pilate had a grand opportunity of shewing himself a fearless, upright judge; he failed, miserably, and his failure carried him down to depths of darkness forever. There is a lesson we may teach here, it is that we may sometimes be placed in positions of responsibility we cannot escape, let us fulfil those responsibilities righteously, in the fear of the Lord; and, further, that we must never seek to propitiate wicked people into friendship for us by joining with them, or allowing their wickedness.

Incidental Lessons.—On the *first* topic—That the bound Jesus is to free the world from bondage.

That the voice of the once silent Jesus shall be heard in the judgment of all.

On the *third* topic—That those who make expediency the rule of life will be sure to fall into sin.

That the natural man will ever choose the false instead of the true.

That the voice of the people is not always the voice of God.

That it is possible still to join in the cry, "Crucify Him."

On the *fourth* topic—That he who can prevent sin and does not, shares the condemnation.

The importance of decision of character.

That even an unprejudiced heathen could declare the righteousness of Jesus.

That no good is ever gained by a crafty course.

Main Lesson.—That the choice to-day is still Christ or Barabbas, and on that choice the great future depends—Matt. 6: 24; 12: 30; Mark 8: 38; Luke 7: 23; 1 Tim. 1: 8.