

was an impostor and a blasphemer? Paint the raging mob, and show how Pilate's unanswerable question affirming our Lord's innocence only exasperated their hate.

Finally, explain by a direct statement or by question and answer the course adopted by Pilate. Ask for a verdict on it. Should he, as a judge, have wished to content the multitude? Why not? Why is Pilate's a name of infamy?

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

By Rev. R. Douglas Fraser, M.A.

The Lessons of the present six months are our Lord's life *in brief*. It is not the detail, but the great outstanding points that are to be taken up. This is nowhere more necessary to be remembered than in the Lesson of to-day. The period covered is that between the upper room and the cross. The garden, the trials before His Jewish judges, and that before Herod, all come in. The teacher will defeat his object if he tries to bring out all the points. Better, a few points made clear and well fixed, than a mass of information, with a hurried rush at the end because the time is up. Let the points brought out belong expressly to the Lesson passage.

Begin with the *chief priests and their sunrise meeting*, v. 1. The scholars will have many a question to ask as to who and what sort of men the chief priests were, and the elders, and the scribes and the "whole council" (Sanhedrim, Council of Seventy). Try to have them answer as many as possible of their own questions. Pilate soon probed the hearts of Jesus' foes. If no one can tell about this, see v. 10. Paint envy so black—you cannot make it too black!—that every scholar will shudder at the very thought of it; it lies at the heart of many sins.

Then you have the *chief priests and Pilate*. How angry they must have been that they had no power to put the despised Nazarene to death; only the Romans could do that. But murder, a true daughter of envy, was in their hearts. Pilate has the authority; they will drag him in. They hated Pilate heartily; but anything will do as an instrument of our hatred.

Pilate and Jesus—Who more powerful than the one, or apparently helpless than the

other? But we shall see what will happen.

Pilate was sincere, at first. Here was a prisoner, and as judge he was anxious to treat him fairly. Pilate's question (v. 2) was a very proper one, for the accusation against Jesus was that He laid claim to kingship. The answer is prompt and straightforward. There is one thing that Jesus with all His marvellous knowledge, did not know:—how to deceive. Happy ignorance, happy powerlessness!

It was the only answer He gave that day. In v. 3, the chief priests, and in vs. 4, 5, Pilate, attack and question Him in vain—"He answered nothing." Jesus answers only the honest-hearted. To all others He is dumb. This is something to think about when we pray.

Have the scholars stop at those words in v. 5, "Pilate marvelled." He might well marvel at One who could stand like a firmly-rooted oak—in the face of such a storm of hatred and abuse. A sure measure of a man's real loftiness and strength of soul, is this same fine scorn of false accusations.

The incident of Barabbas will be eagerly seized upon by the class; it has movement; that is what they like. First, explain the custom, v. 6. Similar customs prevail still in the East. Describe the tumultuous demand of v. 8. Then draw the black picture of Barabbas the murderer. Now comes Pilate's bitterly scornful question, v. 9 (the explanation of the spirit in which he asked it is given in v. 10). What a pitiable creature was Pilate,—eager to show his spite at the Jews rather than to do justice to Jesus.

Then comes the great choice, v. 11, and the terrible demand, vs. 12, 13. Did Pilate begin to be ashamed of himself, and wish now to save Jesus, v. 14? It would look like it. But it was too late. He had had his chance. Now the enemies of Jesus will take no denial. They are mad with rage: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" is their cry.

Three dreadful things Pilate does, v. 15, and just for the sake of popularity—what a price to pay for such a poor commodity; released a murderer against his conscience, scourged the innocent Jesus as a common malefactor, and delivered Him up to the shameful death of the cross.