

## FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

## International S. S. Lesson.

## LESSON VII.—JESUS BEFORE PILATE.—MAY 19.

Mark. xv. 1-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled."—Mark xv. 5.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Christ or Barabbas—Which?

ANALYSIS.—The ACCUSED CHRIST, v. 1-5.

TIME AND PLACE.—Early Friday morning, April 7, A.D. 30, in the judgment hall of Pilate at Jerusalem.

HARMONY.—Matt. xxvii. 1-2, 11-26. Luke, xxiii. 1-7, 13-25. John, xviii. 28-40, xix. 1-16.

INTRODUCTORY.—During Jesus' trial Peter denied knowing Him. After the third denial Jesus turned and looked at Peter, who went out and wept bitterly. The council adjourned till day-break. At dawn it again assembled and formally confirmed the death-sentence passed at the night session. Jesus was then led to Pilate. Judas, in remorse, now returned the money he had received, and went and hanged himself. Pilate examined Jesus and pronounced Him innocent. Learning that He was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, who was then at Jerusalem, but Jesus would answer none of Herod's questions. Herod sent Him back to Pilate, who after vainly trying to release Him, delivered Him to be scourged. The soldiers took Jesus and mocked Him. Pilate finally yielded to the Jews' demand and delivered Him to be crucified.

THE ACCUSED CHRIST, v. 1-5.—The first light of day was but tinting the eastern sky, when the Sanhedrin hurriedly assembled to make formal their condemnation of the divine prisoner. They had sentenced Him to death, but not having the right to carry out their sentence, and desirous that it should be effected by the ignominious way of the cross, they bound Him with a cord about His neck, and led Him away to Pilate the Roman procurator who had come down from Caesarea to Jerusalem, to preserve order during the Passover season. Pilate was a cold, sceptical and vacillating Roman, incapable of recognizing true nobility or purity. He had a supreme contempt for the Jewish religion and institutions which he was not reserved in manifesting. Knowing this the rulers brought charges against Christ before him apart altogether from the religious charges they had considered in condemning Him at the Sanhedrin trial. These accusations were cleverly put, and threefold in character, viz., 1. He was a mover of sedition, 2. He prohibited paying tribute, 3. He claimed to be the King of the Jews. There was of course no truth in any of them in the meaning wished to be conveyed to Pilate's mind, and so he found in his conversation with Christ reported in Jno. xviii. 23-27. Pilate would then have discharged the Master in complete acquittal had he acted as a just judge, but wanting to please the Sanhedrin he brought Christ out from the hall of trial before His accusers, would not enter for fear of defilement. It was then that Jesus became silent. He would not utter a word in reply to this mob of envious, malicious and murder wishing rulers, priests and scribes. Their imprecations and accusations were false, they were not worthy of denial. It is a striking picture we gaze upon. On the steps of the judgment hall stand the judge and his prisoner. The judge, a strong, stalwart Roman with a cold, hard face, clouded by a look of perplexity; the prisoner slight and graceful in figure, with a face sad yet tender and withal composed in expression. Below surges a mob of excited people, shouting, they know not what, with noisy reiteration. Here and there, scattered through the crowd may be seen the priests and rulers, inciting and inflaming the people to more furious and mandatory expression of their hate. Pilate by his presence stills the crowd for a time; only from here and there come bitterly worded accusations against the silent prisoner. The judge is surprised, startled at His calmness. Before he had smiled pityingly on this claimant for regal honors, now he marvels in amazement at the kingly majesty of His appearance. It is a picture of striking contrasts. Pilate, priests, people, prisoner. Strange, is it not, the prisoner stands above them all, a picture of innocence, purity and love. *Ecce Homo*—Behold the Man!

THE AWFUL CHOICE, v. 6-15.—We need not pass from contemplation of this dramatic scene; it has only become more intense. Pilate has made the suggestion that, in accordance with custom, he should release this man in whom he found no fault. The mob, instigated by the priests, refuse his offer, and demand Barabbas, a robber and murderer. Strange is it that they seek Christ's death ostensibly on the grounds of His being a mover of sedition, and now cry for the release of Barabbas who was suffering imprisonment as a leader of rebellion. Such is the inconsistency of the opponents of truth. It is an awful choice. Barabbas instead of Christ; he who took life rather than He who gave; he who sowed seeds of hate rather than He who planted the heart with love; he who maimed rather than He who healed; he who was foe to God rather than God's Son. "Release unto us Barabbas, away with Christ! His blood be upon us and upon our children! Awful choice, awful assumption of guilt, followed, as it was, by a awful retribution. Judas hanged himself; Pilate suicided; Herod died in exile and infamy; Caiaphas next year was deposed; the house of Annas some years later was destroyed by an angry mob and his son dragged through the streets to his death, thirty years after on this very spot some 3,600 Jews were scourged and crucified, among whom were some of the best citizens of Jerusalem, and at the destruction of the city many of those who had cried "Crucify Him!" and thousands of their children were brutally put to death, while it is believed, every Christian escaped! What an awful

power is that of choice, which we must all of us exercise. May God give us strength to choose Him and His Truth at all cost, and no matter what the apparent consequences, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

NOTES ON THE TEXT.—V. 1. *Pilate*,—Governor of Judea by Roman appointment. V. 6. *That feast*,—The Passover. *Released*,—was accustomed to release. V. 7. *Barabbas*,—Son of Abbas, a prominent rebel against Roman power. V. 13. *Crucify*,—The Roman form of capital punishment.

## Application and Illustration.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

SEE JESUS AS KING, v. 2. Jesus did not look much like a king then—as He stood there, His hands shackled, and a cord about His neck. Pilate's question sounds like ridicule. Yet Jesus answered "Yes, I am a king." Where was His kingly power? Where was His throne? Where did His kingdom lie? These questions are not hard to answer now. Millions bow before Him and worship Him as King of their souls. In heaven He is honored and adored as King of kings. On earth, too, His way is felt even where it is not acknowledged. Righteousness and truth and love and grace are the qualities of His reign. Does He so reign in your life?

CHOOSE THE WORLD OR CHRIST, WHICH? v. 9-14.—You must choose, and it must be for one or other, it cannot be for both. James tells us that those who are friends of the world are enemies of Christ. Which do you wish for a friend? Which for an enemy? The world passes away with all its so-called joys and pleasures, but Christ and those who are His abide forever. You need not think you can postpone the choice; that is not possible. For if you have not actually and deliberately chosen Christ you have rejected Him, whether you like to think so or not.

## CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

## Pilate.

First Day—Friendly with Herod—Luke xxiii. 6-12.

Second Day—Shifting responsibility—John xviii. 28-32.

Third Day—What is truth?—John xviii. 33-38.

Fourth Day—A warning—Matt. xxvii. 19-24.

Fifth Day—Behold the Man!—John xix. 1-7.

Sixth Day—Not Caesar's friend—John xix. 8-16.

Seventh Day—THE STORY OF PILATE AND ITS WARNINGS—Matt. xxvii. 11-26.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, May 19—"THE STORY OF PILATE AND ITS WARNINGS," Matt. xxvii. 11-26. The story of Pilate is indeed a sad and terrible one. Beyond the New Testament account he figures but little in history, we simply learn of his recall to Rome and subsequent suicide. His life is a striking warning against the danger of trifling with conscientious convictions, and not acting at once upon the principle of evident justice and duty. He was afraid of men. Dread of the accusations of the Jews, "Thou art not Caesar's friend," the anger of the Emperor, and his consequent loss of power and position, prompted to hand over to death Him of whose innocence he was convinced, and whom indeed he had sought to deliver. When once the Jews, determined on their purpose by bitter hatred and envy, saw that he was unstable and vacillating, his delays and proposed compromises were of no avail. They were as strong in their desire and demand for the death of the innocent, as he was weak in his support of justice and truth. Only fixed principles based upon the sure foundations of eternal right, could have enabled Pilate to resist the threatening and coercive demands of an angry mob. And these fixed principles he did not possess. Whatever sense of justice or compassion he may have had was overcome by his selfishness, diplomacy and cynical unbelief. And so he has become in history the embodiment of all those qualities a judge should not possess.

JUNIOR TOPIC, May 19.—HELPING OUR CHURCH. HOW CAN WE?

## Ruts.

## PAPER ONE. WHAT ARE THEY?

Ruts are holes in the road of progress into which the wheels of many a Christian Endeavor chariot have slipped, and driven so heavily that they were nigh to have stopped revolving altogether. In fact, we think, some few C.E. chariots that at first did run well, have ceased to travel altogether owing just to these holes or grooves in the road. The sad thing is that the ruts are oft times if not indeed always made by the folly or lack-spirit-character of the charioteers themselves, who instead of driving steadily on along the road of progress that leads to the Celestial City, drive back and forth over the same short space until they have worn it into holes, from which they find it almost impossible to extricate their wheels. These ruts are sources of great loss to the King's messengers who travel this road in these chariots. Much time is lost, much patience, and much energy, and this is serious since the King's business needs haste. Another sad result is that sometimes they who are travelling towards the Celestial City in these chariots grow weary of the journey thus rendered tedious, and leave the chariot, some never to return, and some, alas, never to reach the City at all. Thus the avoidance of these dangerous holes becomes an important consideration, and one we will take up in a future paper, together with the question how may they be gotten out, having once slipped in.