

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR DECEMBER.

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Jesus before the Governor*—Matt. 27: 11-26.

The aim of the teacher, in dealing with this lesson, should be to give to the class a connected history of the trial in a narrative form. Nowhere is it better told than in Haun's "Last Day of our Lord's Passion"—Ch. 4-6.

Jesus had been tried before the Sanhedrim and condemned; but, as the Roman authorities alone had power to punish for capital offences, he is now sent to the Procurator—Pontius Pilate,—the high authorities of the Jewish Church having little doubt that Pilate would at once comply with their request, and condemn the prisoner they had found guilty.

Vv. 11-14.—Their first charge is given in Luke 23: 2. It would have been useless to accuse Jesus to Pilate of blasphemy or any religious offence, so they accuse Him as a political offender, guilty of treason. Pilate keeping to the centre of the accusation, asks Him, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" He is answered "yes;" and, amazed at such an answer, he takes Jesus into the Judgment-hall, and questions Him as to His meaning. Jesus then explains clearly that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that, therefore, there was nothing politically dangerous in His claims—John 8: 33-38. Pilate is satisfied, and believes that the fanatical Jews have brought to him only an enthusiast, a philosopher, and so he goes out and says, "I find in Him no fault at all." Here next come in vv. 12-14 of the lesson. The silence of Jesus is impressive and full of teaching. He never spoke except to those who were willing to hear. Silence is golden when you are opposed to fanatics or Pharisees. He says: "Cast not your pearls before swine."

In their outcries against Jesus, the Jews refer to His being from Galilee; and Pilate hearing this, avails himself of it to send Him for trial to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at the time. Luke 23: 4-12. Herod mocks and sends Him back; and, from v. 15 of the lesson, we have Jesus' second appearance before Pilate.

Pilate now gives way a little more to the Jews. He offers to chastise Jesus and let Him go. Luke 23: 13-16. They are no more satisfied than a tiger would be with a taste of blood. Pilate then makes another offer, based on a custom compli-

mentary to the great gathering of the people at the Passover time; and, in order to succeed, he narrows their choice between Jesus and one Barabbas, who, for sedition and murder, had been cast into prison. Vv. 15-18 of the lesson.

V. 19.—While waiting their answer, a message is brought to him from his wife. That she should take so unusual a step, is either a singular proof how deep and widespread was the impression our Lord had made in the course of His short ministry, or it may be regarded as an indication of God's readiness to strengthen all who are striving to do right. It should have made Pilate resolute to do right; but, instead of that, he compromised, and so he was forced step by step to do what he had determined not to do.

Vv. 20-23.—The time spent in receiving this message gave the priests and elders opportunity to move about among the mob, and stimulate them to ask for the release of Barabbas. So that, when Pilate turns and asks the question again, they call out "Barabbas." Surprised at so astounding a choice, he helplessly abdicates his position as governor and judge, and asks, 'what shall I then do with Jesus?' The crowd, having gathered strength by delays, and inflamed by the chief priests, is ready with an answer, "Let Him be crucified." Pilate argues. But they are in no mood now for argument. They simply yell back the cry, 'let Him be crucified.'

Vv. 24-26.—Pilate thinks he has done all that man can do. He did more than could have been expected of him. But he did not dare to do his duty. Yet he thinks he can throw the responsibility off himself and transfer it to them. They readily accept it, but none the less does it remain on him. He then hands Jesus over to the soldiers to scourge Him as the usual preliminary to crucifixion. The account of the scourging is given in Mark 15: 16-20. Pilate is so moved at the sight that he thinks the people will relent, and so he goes forth to them again with Jesus, saying, "Behold the man." The unavailing attempt is described in John 19: 4-16. There is no pity for Jesus. Jew and Gentile have united in rejecting Him, and He is led away as a lamb to the slaughter.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Crucifixion*—Matt. 27: 45-54.

Jesus has been led without the gate of Jerusalem (Heb 13: 12) to the hill of Calvary; and there, on a low, bare elevation, somewhat like a human skull in