

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

INTRODUCTORY. "Having decided upon the death of Jesus, the Sanhedrim adjourned until daybreak, when it again assembled and passed sentence in legal form. Judas now realized the full consequences of his treachery, and experienced that awful *revulsion of feeling* that overtakes the murderer when he sees the deed done that cannot be undone. In his remorse there is no penitence, he seeks, not forgiveness, but oblivion. Returning the money for which in his greed he had sold his Master, he declared himself guilty of betraying innocent blood. The utter heartlessness of the reply, "What is that to us? See thou to that," is only equalled by the shameless confession implied that they cared nothing about the innocence or guilt of Jesus. Their sole object was to murder him judicially, to the justice of the case they were utterly indifferent. Judas, haunted by remorse, sought a vain refuge from despair in suicide. The chief priests, who had no scruple about putting an innocent man to death, had very nice consciences about using the money they themselves had paid for his blood for any temple purpose. So picking up the thirty pieces of silver which the conscience-stricken Judas had thrown down they bought with them a burying ground for strangers (Acts 1: 19), herein fulfilling the prophecy uttered so many centuries before (Zech. 11: 12, 13). Parallel passages, Matt. 27: 1-30; Luke 23: 1-25; John 18: 28-40; 19: 1-16.

LESSON PLAN. I. The Silent Prisoner. vs. 1-5. II. The Cruel Mob. vs. 6-14. III. The Coward Judge. vs. 15.

I. THE SILENT PRISONER. 1. In the morning—"During the early morning." Luke says "as soon as it was day" (compare John 18: 28) "the formal meeting of the council must have taken place after six o'clock in the morning" (Lange). The mocking mentioned in ch. 14: 65 took place just before this meeting. The whole council—This meeting was probably held in the usual council chamber within the temple area (Luke 22: 66, where "council" may mean "council chamber"). Here alone, according to the Talmud, sentence of death could be pronounced. Held a consultation—Their debate was about the proper method of procedure (Matt. 27: 1). The power of inflicting capital punishment had been taken away from them, they must therefore approach Pilate in such a way as to secure the infliction of death by the Roman law. The narrative reveals the course they decided upon. Bound Jesus—To shew that he was a condemned felon whose fate was already morally decided. His bonds (John 18: 12, 24) had been removed during the trial. Carried him away and delivered him—Probably an imposing procession was organized for the purpose of impressing the people and the Roman governor. According to old tradition a cord was placed around the Saviour's neck. This appearance of utter defeat and helplessness discouraged the fickle crowd, and the pompous procession inspired their awe. At the same time the fanatical mob rallied around the venerated representatives of their ancient religion. The word for "delivered" in the original contains an allusion to this act as a second "betrayal" of the Saviour (Lange). Pontius Pilate—He was the sixth Roman procurator of Judea, and succeeded to the office in A. D. 26. His capital was Cæsarea, but he had come to Jerusalem to preserve order during the critical time of the Passover. He had a bitter and derisive contempt for the Jews, and had, on several occasions, provoked tumults by his wanton disregard of their religious convictions. At Jerusalem he resided in the splendid palace built by Herod the

Great. He held his office 10 years, when he was deposed and banished to Gaul, where he committed suicide.

2. The Jews would not enter the palace, because, being the house of a Gentile, they would have been ceremonially defiled by doing so, and in consequence incapacitated from eating the passover. Pilate, therefore, came out to them, and, causing his official throne to be placed on a tessellated pavement before the open court (John 19: 13), he demanded the accusation against Jesus. (See John 19: 29-32). Receiving the insolent answer, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee," he declined to act thus blindly in the matter, and referred the case back to themselves. To this their reply was that a death sentence alone would satisfy them, and they were incompetent to pronounce it. The chief priests knew that a Roman judge would hardly think blasphemy worthy of death, and so they shrank from naming the offence. When compelled to speak they adroitly, but most unjustly, altered the charge to treason against Cæsar, which their own law would not have punished so very severely. (Compare John 18: 32 and Matt. 20: 19; Luke 18: 32, 33). Jesus is therefore accused of "perverting the nation" (Luke 23: 2, 5; Acts 16: 20, 21; 17: 6, 7), "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar" (Matt. 17: 27; 22: 21; Ch. 12: 17), and calling himself "Christ, a King." (Luke 23: 2). The base hypocrisy of this last count in the indictment is manifest, for it was just such a king that they expected "the Christ" to be, and they hated Jesus because he discouraged their revolutionary ideas, Pilate asked him—This is *Pilate's first conversation with Jesus*. With Roman directness he calls upon the prisoner to plead. The form of the question in the original gives it a touch of mingled nonchalance and sarcasm. "Thou art, I understand, the king of the Jews?" The conversation is given more at length in John 18: 33-38. In reply Jesus asks whether this is his own conviction, or whether he is merely