



LESSON VIII.—MAY 20, 1906.

## Death of John the Baptist.

Mark vi., 14-29.

### Golden Text.

Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess.  
—Eph. v., 18.

### Home Readings.

Monday, May 14.—Mark vi., 14-29.

Tuesday, May 15.—Mark vi., 1-13.

Wednesday, May 16.—Matt. xi., 1-15.

Thursday, May 17.—Matt. xvii., 1-13.

Friday, May 18.—Luke iii., 1-9.

Saturday, May 19.—Luke iii., 10-20.

Sunday, May 20.—Matt. xiv., 1-12

(By Davis W. Clark.)

Extremes met in the fortress-palace of Herod Antipas on the occasion of his birthday banquet. Nazarithish abstemiousness kept vigil in the dungeon. Herodian wantonness blazed and reeled in the banquet-chamber. Self-oblivious devotion below is matched by an overweening ambition above. The forgiving spirit, ready to pray for spiteful users, is offset by a vindictive thirst for the blood of one whose very life was a rebuke to sinners. On the inky agate of the Herodian court the character of John Baptist stood out in high relief, a clear-cut cameo of snowy lustre. . . . If any Herod ever needed a post-graduate course in the art of luxury, this one had it. He received his finishing touches during his visit to Rome. At that capital of debauchery he contracted the incestuous and adulterous connection which called forth the Baptist's stern and constant, 'It is not lawful.' . . . This banquet seems to have been, in part, at least, a military affair. Antipas was toasting and feasting his chiliarchs. He was putting them in heart for the war into which his unnatural crime had plunged him. Their ivory couches rested upon tessellated floor of banquet-hall in the marble palace, within the impregnable fortress of Machaerus. The tetrarch's courtiers had brought in haste from every quarter the daintiest viands of fish, flesh and fowl, while wine filled golden goblets to their brim, and the air was scented with jet and spray of perfume. . . . Herodias was in her boudoir. Ambition was her ruling vice. She had discarded her rightful husband, father of her beautiful daughter, because, forsooth, he had no title. She married one who already sustained the relation of uncle and brother-in-law to her, and in doing so displaced a loyal wife from her husband's side. . . . At length, Herodias had a title and numerous palaces and fawning courtiers, but she had also a Nemesis, whose imperious, 'It is not lawful,' neither threat nor cajolery nor bribe could silence. Her strait was desperate. The uncompromising preacher of righteousness was making progress with her paramour. If he converted him she would be discarded and all lost. She had secured the Baptist's imprisonment. But locks and bars seemed no restraint to his subtle influence, while his dungeon walls seemed to echo his 'It is not lawful!' with ever louder detonations. . . . The desperate and wicked woman baited her hook with her daughter's modesty, and went angling in the pool of drunken revelry. When Antipas found himself caught, he lacked moral courage to snap the hook. He feared to vex Herodias, and had superstitious scruples about breaking his oath. He doubted the effect of his vacillation upon the courtiers and chiliarchs whom he was seeking by this very banquet to attach more closely to himself. On the other hand, he was apprehensive of the

effect on the people of the murder of a man who stood so high in their regard. With the infamous choice of this hour he began the descent which terminated in disgrace, exile, death. . . . A moment later, Salome, a paragon of voluptuous beauty, flushed with her lascivious dance, carries, with an inhumanly steady hand, a golden platter from the banquet-table, on which rests the ghastly head of the martyr. A choice dish that for Herodias! It was her share of the banquet.

### THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

A character in which there is no balance-wheel of principle is despicable. When such a one reaches a position of power it is a public calamity. 'As a roaring lion and a raging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.' . . . Some who would be lavish in their upbraiding of a social outcast are singularly mute before sin while it is still shrined in wealth, luxury and power. John Baptist was not of that order. . . . No station in life is so lofty as to lift its occupant above the reach of the pains and penalties of sin. They can pass even palace doors and fall with their full weight upon kings' heart. . . . It is a fearful thing to deliberately cherish hatred and revenge in the heart. It is the seed of murder, and is sure to bear its crimson fruit. . . . For his oath's sake. A poor woman of my city said to me last winter that there came a day when they had not a scrap to put upon the table. She put her shawl on, and went down to the corner saloon, and stated the fact to the saloon-keeper, reminding him, in addition, that her husband had spent a good deal of money at his bar. He professed to be sorry for her, but said he had promised not to aid anybody, and, therefore, could not help her. Surprising how tenacious some men are of their oaths and promises when it suits their convenience! That proverb has no weight with them, 'A bad promise is better broken than kept.' . . . This was that Herod, who in mockery, clothed Jesus in royal robes, and sent him back to Pilate. . . . Out of the corrupt court of Herod Antipas, Manahem, his foster-brother, and Chusa, his major domo, rose to discipleship with Jesus. Nothing prevented Herod himself from rising but his love for self and sin. . . . 'Whom I beheaded.' No need of the Baptist now! Conscience performed the office of ten thousand accusers. . . . That the way of the transgressor is hard never had more apt illustration than in the case of Herod and Herodias. The inordinately ambitious woman induced her husband to go to Rome, and enter his claim to the title of king. But he lost even what he had, and both perished miserably in exile.

### C. E. Topic.

Sunday, May 20.—Topic—Lessons from the lives of Elijah and John the Baptist. Luke i., 14-17; I. Kings xviii., 30-39. (A temperance topic).

### Junior C. E. Topic.

#### A FATHER'S LOVE.

Monday, May 14.—A disloyal son. II Sam. xv., 1-6.

Tuesday, May 15.—Stealing a kingdom. II. Sam. xv., 7-14.

Wednesday, May 16.—Father and son at war.—II. Sam. xviii., 1-5.

Thursday, May 17.—Death of Absalom. II. Sam. xviii., 6-17.

Friday, May 18.—A father's grief. II. Sam. xviii., 33.

Saturday, May 19.—Fathers and children. Prov. xvii., 6.

Sunday, May 20.—Topic—A father's love. II. Sam. xviii., 5, 29-32.

### Expiring Subscriptions.

Would each subscriber kindly look at the address tag on this paper? If the date thereon is May, it is time that the renewals were sent in so as to avoid losing a single copy. As renewals always date from the expiry of the old subscriptions, subscribers lose nothing by remitting a little in advance.

### Springtime of the Soul.

The life of which spring is so full shows us something of the essential nature of all true life. The true life of man springs, like all life, from other life, born in the sacrifice of the life that goes before it. The plant bears its fruit and dies, and every loving mother gives her youth and fresh beauty for her children. Yet in a sense this is a gain—a greater gain to the mother who gives than to the child who receives, her sacrifice really the opportunity which satisfies her heart. It is the glory of a plant to give itself to the blossoms of its crown; it is the glory of a mother to give herself to the daughters in whom her womanhood is renewed and redoubled. In the truest sense her life is not lost in its multiplied sacrifices. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' It is in sacrifice that we enter into the true life. 'He that will save his life shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'—Selected.

The only preparation for the morrow is the right use of to-day. The stone in the hands of the builder must be put in its place and fitted to receive another. The morrow comes for naught, if to-day is not heeded. Neglect not the call that comes to thee this day, for such neglect is nothing else than boasting thyself of to-morrow.—G. Owen.

### Profit and Loss.

Every prudent person engaged in business keeps accounts, in order to know his profit and loss. This is what the clerks in the great counting-houses are so busy about every now and then with their great books; this is what the village storekeeper is sometimes doing, as he sits at his little desk at the end of the counter, when the store is closed for the evening, with his one small book open before him.

All traders, be they great or small, take account of profit and loss. They could not get on without it.

But you would probably not expect to find anything about profit and loss in the Bible. Yet so it is. There is one sentence there so solemn and searching that it ought to set every one thinking about profit and loss. It is this:—

'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

You may be no merchant, great or small, yet you are deeply concerned in this question. You have more at stake here than the richest merchant in the world has in all his great concerns. For this question is about your soul.

You have a soul, whether you care for it or not; a precious soul that will never die; a soul that will be happy or miserable for ever. You cannot get rid of it. A soul you have, and a soul you must have for ever.

Yet, strange to say, you may lose your soul. You cannot get rid of it, and yet you may lose it. This seems a contradiction, but it is true. Thousands will prove to have lost their souls. They are losing them day by day. Almost all they do makes loss the more sure, and their whole course of life seems to have this object.

This word 'lose,' when used about the soul, means something different from what it does about other things. We all know what losing a horse, or a sheep, or a piece of money, means; we part with it, we cannot keep it, we cannot find it; we do not know what has become of it, it is gone.

But losing the soul is a different thing; it is not gone; we have it still, but only to make us miserable; it is ruined and undone for ever; it can never be happy again.

What are you doing with your soul? Are you losing it? And if so, for what? Is there any gain so great, any sin so sweet, as to make it worth while to lose the soul?

The verse I have mentioned gives an answer to the question; it is, indeed, a question itself, but such a question as wants no answer.

'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

What indeed? What can make up for such a loss?—'Everybody's Magazine.'