

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FOURTH QUARTER: STUDIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

A. D. 29. LESSON X. THE CROSS; or, The Dying Saviour. Luke 23, 33-46. Dec. 8.

EXPLANATORY.

Verses 33. Calvary. A location not precisely known, but outside, though near, the wall of Jerusalem. The name means "pertaining to a skull," and may refer either to the shape of the hill, (if it was a hill) or to its use as a place of execution. Crucified him. The cross-beam was nailed to the upright, and laid upon the ground. The person condemned was stripped of all clothing, and laid upon the cross with arms outstretched. By a blow a nail was driven through the quivering flesh of each hand, pinning it securely to the beam; and another longer nail through the feet. A small projection of wood was fixed at the middle of the cross, to relieve the hands from the weight of the body, which otherwise would tear them asunder. The cross with its burden was then lifted to an erect position, and fixed in the earth, with the feet raised only a few inches above the ground. There the sufferer was left to endure inconceivable agony until death came to his relief. Malefactor. Two thieves, placed beside the innocent Jesus to make his death more ignominious. Thus unconsciously was fulfilled the prophecy, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

34. Father, forgive them. "When the blood of the great sacrifice began to flow, the great High-priest began to intercede." L. "True to his self-sacrificing nature, he forgets his own sufferings to ask mercy on his foes." They know not. The prayer for forgiveness applies in direct proportion to the lack of knowledge. The soldiers, who simply obeyed orders, received its full benefit, while the chief priests, who knew his prophetic power, while they may not have known his divinity, were least benefited. 2. "The greatest sinners, even those who have done violence to their Saviour, may find pardon if they repent and sue for mercy in his name." Parted his raiment. The garments of the condemned were the perquisites of the executioners. Cast lots. For his woven outer robe, which was without seam. 3. "Gamblers will ply their trade even in the shadow of the cross and in the presence of death."

35, 36, 37, 38. The people stood. Some few with sympathy, more with revilement, but the most in unconcern and curiosity. Rulers. It was the hour of their apparent triumph, and they glared over the pain of their innocent victim. 4. "How often seeming success is real failure." Saved others. Not even his enemies could deny the good that had been wrought by the life of Christ. Let him save himself. 5. "He that would save others must be ready, not to save, but to sacrifice himself." If he be Christ. They argued that if he were Christ he could not be put to death; hence if he were put to death he could not be Christ. Vinegar. Not the stupefying potion given to ease the pain of the condemned, but the common sour wine of their noon-day meal, which the guard ate around the cross. King of the Jews. A fling at the Jews, no less than an insult to Jesus. Superscription. This was written by Pilate, and was fixed upon the upright beam over the head of Christ. It was customary thus to place on the cross the statement of the crime committed by the condemned man. Greek and Latin and Hebrew. The first was the language known at that time by intelligent people everywhere; the second was the official language of the empire; the third was the Aramaean dialect of the Jewish people. The various reports of the Gospels may have arisen from the slight variations in the different languages. The King. 6. "Even his cross bore testimony to all the world of his royalty."

39, 50, 41. One of the malefactors. Matthew and Mark speak of both the thieves joining in the derision. They may have done so: but as the darkness began to overspread the earth (Matt. 27, 45) one may have relented, and turned from unbelief to faith. Railed on him. 7. "See how near to Christ a man may be, and yet be not saved."—Bonar. Thyself and us. 8. "Like many at the present time, he would have Christ prove his power by saving sinners without repentance for their sins." Rebuked him. "This good thief, like the olive-tree, bore fruits late, but good store of that which was excellent."—Trapp. Dost not thou fear God. 9. "Nearness to death ought to make a man tremble before God." Same condemnation. That is, suffering the same punishment. That indeed justly. 10. "A true penitent recognizes the justice of punishment." This man. Even from the cross of the

condemned malefactor, as well as from the lips of the unjust judge, Pilate, comes a testimony of Jesus' innocence.

42, 43. Lord, remember me. A wonderful prayer. 1. It recognizes Jesus as Lord of all, though hanging on a cross. 2. It recognizes his kingdom as spiritual. 3. It recognizes a future state wherein the dead may live. 4. It recognizes his own salvation as dependent on this convicted dying man. [Teacher, call attention to the penitent thief as a type of the sinner who seeks and finds salvation, showing, 1. Conviction of sin. 2. Confession of sin. 3. Humble prayer for mercy. 4. Strong faith in Christ. Jesus said unto him. He gave, 1st. An immediate answer, because to delay would be to lose all. 2. A willing answer; forgetting his own sufferings, and always ready to save a soul. 3. An abundant answer, far surpassing the petition—instead of mere remembrance, promising companionship; instead of some distant hour, promising it at once. 11. "Recognize Christ's readiness to answer a sinner's prayer." 12. "Learn how rapidly a soul may pass from death to life from condemnation to acceptance." 13. "See how near to hell a soul may be, and yet be saved."—Bonar. In paradise. The blissful state of the disembodied souls that have been saved, and, in conscious enjoyment, are waiting the full glory of heaven. 15. "Redeemed souls pass at once upon death to a condition of happiness with God."

44, 45. The sixth hour. Six hours after sunrise, that is, about noon. Darkness. A supernatural shadow, not an eclipse of the sun, which would be impossible at the full moon. Over all the earth. Or "all the land," according to Matthew. The sun hid his face from the scene of blood. Until the ninth hour. Christ was nailed upon the cross at the third hour, nine o'clock, the time when the morning sacrifice was laid upon the altar in the temple. He died at three o'clock in the afternoon, just the hour when the priest stood by the altar with the evening sacrifice. Veil of the temple was rent. The veil of finely woven material, which separated between the Holy Place and the inner Holy of Holies. An unsewn hand tore it asunder at the instant of Christ's death, showing that the way to the holiest was now opened to all. 15. "Heaven is disclosed and made accessible to man by the death of Christ"

46. Cried with a loud voice. The words recorded in Matthew 27, 46, "Eloi, eloi," etc. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Father. Even in the moment of death we see his divinity assert itself. He proclaims himself the Son of God. I commend my spirit. He dismisses his spirit from the body, not as one who is seized by the mighty hand of death, but as One who is superior even to that last great enemy. He gave up the ghost. "He dismissed the spirit." His earthly work was now completed; his triumph won; and the atonement for the sins of the world fully rendered.

GOLDEN TEXT: God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Gal. 6, 14.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION: The atoning sacrifice.

The next lesson is Luke 24, 13-32.

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