

an insurrection and led out four thousand sicarii into the wilderness? This Egyptian, according to Josephus, was one who, in the reign of Nero, A.D. 55, collected a large number of adherents, and predicted that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down before him. Felix made an attack upon his followers, but the Egyptian himself escaped, and now Claudius imagines that this is the man who stands before him. Paul told him who he was, and asked permission to address the people. He stood on the stairs, whilst the multitude were making a noise and surging below them. Beckoning with his hand, they were silent, and he spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue. In the very same spot Paul's Master was persecuted—hence the memory text (John xv. 20). He was even now, then, bearing the marks of his Saviour's cross.

October 21. *Morning.* ISRAEL AT SINAI. (Exod. xix. 1-11. 20-25.) The Israelites came, three months after they left Egypt, to Sinai, and camped before the Mount. The probability is, that the place of their encampment was the plain Sabaiyeh, which stretches three or four miles before Jebel-Moussa, the true Sinai, and on which the whole of the people, numbering two millions and a half, could stand and see the glory of God ("History of Moses," p. 199). Moses went up to God, who told him what He was about. The Israelites were now to become His chosen people by a new covenant which He would make with them (ver. 3-6). Moses called for the elders, and told them the words of Jehovah, and at once they expressed their willingness to obey (ver. 7, 8). Alas! they did not know themselves. Many promise obedience without reflecting on their natural indisposition to it. Jehovah would come unto Moses in a thick cloud; the people were then told to sanctify themselves, to wash their clothes, and to be ready by the third day. God is holy, and only those who are holy may approach Him. We pass to ver. 20. Jehovah came down on the top of Sinai, and at His command Moses went up to Him. Then he received a charge that the people should not draw near to gaze in vain curiosity, lest they should perish. Then the priests were to sanctify themselves by washings and anointings; and bounds were set to the mount, that only those whom God chose should come near. Moses and Aaron were to go up, but the priests and the people to stand aloof. We learn from other passages that the divine glory came from Paran, to the north of Sinai, and that Jehovah was accompanied by thousands of angels (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Acts vii. 3; etc.). At the same time Moses was the one mediator between God and the people (Gal. iii. 19), and when the trumpet sounded Moses spake or asked what God required, and God answered him by a voice (ver. 19). The memory text is Gal. iii. 24, which tells us that the law was our schoolmaster, or rather pedagogue, to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. By the works of the law we cannot be justified, but the law reveals to us our weakness, and then we go to Christ and are saved by faith in Him.

*Afternoon.* PAUL AND THE BIGOTED JEWS. (Acts xxii. 1-37. 17-36.) The apostle began his defence in the most courteous manner. He spake in Hebrew, to which they were the most partial as it was their native tongue. He told them who he was—a Jew of Tarsus; how he was brought up, at the feet of Gamaliel, one of their own celebrated teachers on Jesus, and how zealous he was toward God, for the law—a persecutor of the Christians (Ver. 5-16 relate the circumstances of his conversion. Ver. 17 brings him again to Jerusalem after that event, ch. ix. 14). Here, as he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance, or ecstasy, as the word means, similar to that named in 2 Cor. xii. 2, but not the same. In this trance the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem, to which he replied that the people knew how zealous he had been against Christ, which, contrasted with his present zeal for Christ, would perhaps make a deep impression on their minds. But no, they would not receive his testimony; and the Lord's imperative command was, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence among the Gentiles" (ver. 21). The Gentiles! the utterance of that word was enough. They would hear no more. For that the Gentiles should enter the kingdom of God as Gentiles was a doctrine they could not brook. Hence they cried (ver. 22), "Away with such a fellow from the earth." Then they rent their garments, and threw dust into the air, intending, perhaps, to stone Paul, but certainly as indicative of the fury of their passion. "It is dangerous," says a German poet, "to awaken the lion; the teeth of the tiger are destructive; but the most terrible of all terrors is man in his rage." The chief captain now brought him into the castle, and was about to examine him

by scourging. The apostle was bound to a post with thongs or strong cords; and, in order to extort from him a confession of some crime which Claudius supposed he had committed, and which had thus enraged the Jews, he was to be beaten with thongs as the manner was (24-25). A centurion stood by to superintend the scourging, when Paul said to him, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman?" It was not lawful. A Roman citizen had a right to claim protection from any punishment until he had been legally tried and condemned, besides which, scourging was inflicted on slaves only. The centurion remonstrated with the commander, who at once inquired of Paul, "Art thou a Roman?" "Yea," replied the apostle. But how had he gained the privilege? "I obtained it for a large sum," said the commander. "But I was free born," said Paul. That is, his father was a Roman citizen, so that he had inherited the right. A Christian may use the privileges of his birth for his own safety, and for the glory of God. Those who would have examined or tortured Paul, now left him, for Claudius was afraid when he knew all this, and the next day, wishing to know the certainty, or the certain cause why the Jews accused him, he loosed him from his bonds and called together the Sanhedrim, before whom he placed his prisoner (ver. 29, 30). Learn Rom. x. 21, God's sorrow for Israel's unbelief.

Oct. 28. *Morning.* THE TEN WORDS. (Exod. xx. 1-21.) From the peak called Jebel-Moussa God spake the ten words to the multitudes assembled on the plain below. They heard His voice to the very extremity of the camp; and He said, I am Jehovah, thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. The commandments which are called by the Jews "the fundamentals of the faith." The number ten is the perfect number, because it receives and contains every kind of number (ver. 3). The first word declares the unity of God, and forbids any being to be worshipped but Himself (ver. 4-6). The second condemns the use of all images or representations of God, and the honour paid to them; as, for example, by the church of Rome, who in some of her catechisms leaves this word out (ver. 7). The third word forbids the taking of God's name in vain, the utterance of false oaths, and all irreverent conversation (ver. 8-11). The fourth word enjoins the keeping of the Sabbath, which, under that dispensation, was the seventh day of the week, whilst under the present it is the first, as being the day of our Lord's resurrection. The law of the Sabbath has never been repealed, though the form of its observance has in some respects been altered. These are the laws of the first table, referring to the duties we owe to God. The following six words (ver. 12-17) contain those of the second table, and forbid disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, theft, false accusation, and all coveting of a neighbour's goods. There were thunderings and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, whilst the mountain seemed to smoke. No wonder that the people stood afar off, or fell back and asked Moses to speak to them rather than God. They had heard as much as they could bear; yet God only came to prove, not to destroy them, and Moses bade them not to fear. All these laws are still in force, hence the memory text, Matt. v. 17.

*Afternoon.* PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL. (Acts xxiii. 1-21.) This council was that of Sanhedrim, or seventy elders of the Jews, and before it Paul stood and affirmed that he had lived in all good conscience before God—that is, had always acted as his conscience dictated. Ananias, the high-priest, with great injustice, commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth. What was Paul's reply? It was terrible, yet just. "God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall." This expression pointed to his hypocrisy, for walls were made white by superficial paint which, underneath, were nothing but filthy clay. He professed to be a judge, yet was acting a most unjust part. Ten years later Ananias was murdered (Josephus, Wars ii. 17, 19). "Revilest thou God's High Priest?" said someone to Paul (ver. 4). The president of the council was not always the High Priest, and certainly Ananias was not the High Priest when Paul went to Damascus (Acts ix. 1), or he must have known him. He obtained the office a few years later, so that Paul was not now aware that he held it, and said, "I wist not," or I knew not, "that he was the High Priest," admitting that it was not right to speak evil of the ruler (Exodus xxii. 28). At this moment he perceived that some of the council were Sadducees, and some Pharisees, and so he adopts a different course, and says, "I am a Pharisee, etc., etc." The Pharisees believed in the resurrection, the Sadducees did not. Thus a discussion arose between them (ver. 6-9), and some took Paul's part, whilst others were