

V. 29. *Take my yoke*; a current expression among the rabbis. "Become my disciples." *Learn of me*; take me as your Master in religion. *Meek and lowly in heart*; Jesus' qualification to be a religious teacher. The proud man cannot know God, Ps. 138 : 6. *Rest unto your souls*; the satisfaction of your desire for the knowledge of God.

V. 30. *My yoke is easy*. Christ's doctrine of God fits the spiritual nature of man. It satisfies mind, heart and conscience. *My burden is light*; as contrasted with the legalism of the scribes. The burdens of Jesus are the commands he lays upon us. But these commands bid us strive after nothing short of perfection. Is not his burden, then, the heaviest of all? It would be, only he inspires the love which can fulfil his bidding.

Ch. 12 : 14 tell how the Pharisees, seeing that Jesus' views of religion were radically different from theirs, planned to destroy the new teacher and his heretical opinions.

Light from the East

JOHN IN PRISON—Among the old Hebrews there was very little confinement in prison.

The process of justice was simple and swift. When a malefactor was seized he was hurried before a judge or an improvised court, and when he was condemned he was taken out immediately for the execution of the sentence. But if people had to wait, say, for an oracle from Jehovah to decide, the wrongdoer was kept in ward, as in the case of the man who broke the Sabbath (Num. 15 : 34) or that of the blaspheming Danite, Lev. 24 : 12. So Joseph's brethren put him in a pit pending an issue of the matter. The common forms of punishment were fines, stripes and death; imprisonment as punishment did not fit in with Hebrew ideas.

Under Roman law justice was slower, but more discriminating. Wrongdoers were held till they could be fairly tried. The Romans used prisons for both purposes, to keep men safe against the day of trial, and as places of punishment. The Herods imitated the Romans. Herod Antipas put the inconvenient prophet John out of his way; he imprisoned him at Macharus. Whether he was chained between soldiers there, or was condemned to solitary confinement we have no means of knowing.

THE LESSON APPLIED

V. 1. This has been called "an age of doubt." Never before, perhaps, did so many people sympathize with the mood that prompted Daniel Webster to have inscribed upon his grave stone this scriptural legend: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." Some doubt honestly like John the Baptist, and some doubt dishonestly as when they wish to do away with God as father to the agnostic or atheistic thought. In all honest doubt there is the seeking spirit. It would rather believe than disbelieve. It ever asks, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It would think things through to the end.

V. 4. How shall we meet the doubt of our age? In the way of Jesus. He did not send John back to the Old Testament. He submitted present facts as evidence. A chaplain at the front came across a poor fellow wounded on the field. Taking out his pocket Bible he asked the man if he would like to

have a bit of scripture read to him. The reply was, "If it is all the same to you I would rather have a drink of water." The chaplain procured the drink of water. Then the wounded man complained about his head being uneasy and the chaplain's coat was turned into a pillow. Then the chaplain noticed that the man was cold and shivering. The chaplain's great coat was wrapped about the sufferer like a blanket. The wounded soldier said, "If there is anything in that book which will make a man treat another as you have just now treated me, for God's sake read it." It is the gospel lived before men that gives the preached gospel its grip and power.

V. 6. Though "there lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds," Yet faith unclouded by any doubt at all is the true ideal. "Blessed is he," said Jesus, "who shall not be offended in me."