

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON,
JULY 17.

Lesson III. Peter's Confession,
Matt. 16. 13-28. Golden Text,
Matt. 16. 16.

Verse 13. The parts of Caesarea Philippi—It was a lovely district, whose scenery, from its richness and variety, has been compared to the Italian Tivoli. Here, about a grove dedicated by early Greek settlers to the worship of Pan, had grown up a heathen colony, and Herod the Great had built a temple of white marble in honor of his patron Augustus. As the place increased into a city Philip the tetrarch had adorned it and given it a name suggesting his own power and that of Caesar Augustus.

Who do men say?—The question may be regarded either as preparatory to the more incisive one to follow, or as a request for information from those who, through closer intercourse with the people, would know their views. Note that it is the people's and not the rulers' opinion which Jesus desires to know. Ever since he began his public career men had been discussing his deeds and his teachings.

The Son of man—Mark and Luke omit this touch, which carries so much of our Lord's consciousness of his humiliation and glory. The marginal reading, "that I, the Son of man, am," involves the assertion that he who speaks is the Son of man, an assertion which could mean nothing else to Jewish ears than a claim to Messianism.

14. Others, Jeremiah—Though disesteemed during his life, he came to be regarded as one of the noblest of the prophets. There seems to have been a belief that he was to return to the earth.

15. Who say ye?—The last word is emphatic. Could it be possible that they who had lived in such intimacy with him shared these chances and uncertain guesses of the crowd? It was a crucial question, since the answer would indicate how deeply the training of the past months had really taken hold of them.

16. Peter answered—Unquestionably he was pre-eminent among the apostles, their spokesman. Matthew not only places him first in the list (Matt. 10. 2), as all do, but calls him "first." Already he had accepted the Messianism of Jesus (John 1. 41), and more recently had given practical utterance to his belief (John 6. 69). But however tentative these former convictions, there is now nothing but the heartiest full allegiance.

16. Thou art the Christ—To a Jew this could mean nothing less than the One in whom were fulfilled all the expectations of the prophets, all the eager longings of men, all the purposes of God for the redemption of men. Under the circumstances, it was an extremely significant confession. Jesus had certainly done nothing to encourage the prevailing conceptions of Messianism. On the other hand, He had opposed them. As a result, even the Baptist had cherished a doubt. But now, in spite of all that seemed to contradict the Lord's Messianism according to Jewish ideals, this declaration from the disciples comes forth clear and decisive.

17.—Blessed art thou—This is the only case of the Master's calling an individual blessed. It is a kind of cry of exultation, as if he were relieved, by the answer of a great load of anxiety. The use of the original name, Simon, adds solemnity, especially as it is coupled with the other name, John, meaning "grace of the Lord." The former Simon had truly become a child of divine grace; for his confession surely came not from any human instruction but directly from the Father in heaven.

18. I also say unto thee—He too, as well as the Father, has a revelation to make to Peter. It has to do not with himself but with the future of his own work, and the relation which Peter is to sustain to that work.

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church—Endless controversy has arisen over this saying. Which is meant, that the rock is Peter, or Jesus, or the confession of Peter, or the other disciples as well as Peter? In Eph. 2. 20, Christ is called the "corner stone"; but, the central idea about him here is that he is to be the Builder, and is, therefore, to be the directing agency in all that has to do with the framing of the building.

The gates of Hades—A proverbial expression for the nether world,

where the spirits of the dead are said to await the general resurrection. It corresponds to the Sheol of the Old Testament (Isa. 38. 10). Shall not prevail against it—Keeping in mind the metaphor of Hades as a stronghold with mighty gates, the idea conveyed is, that death, with all its grim powers, can never be a match for the church whose Builder is Christ, and whose membership consists of living souls, of whom the first is Peter.

19. The keys of the kingdom of heaven—Authority to admit into the church, or to reject, whomsoever they will as the vicars of Christ on earth.

Whatever thou shalt bind—No reference to the forgiveness of sins. The words, in the original, describe Peter's authority as a teacher. They may be assumed also to apply to the other apostles. The Jewish rabbis were authorized to permit certain things as lawful and to teach certain things as orthodox. So, whatever the apostles should sanction in the faith and morals of the church would receive the indorsement of heaven. Their condemnation of any practice or belief would also meet with divine approval. There is no intimation, however, that what is once sanctioned in the church is sanctioned forever, however changed conditions may be. We must be careful not to read into these verses any of the false doctrines of priestcraft.

20. Then—The word is emphatic. Having expressed his joy at their confession, and outlined the part they were to play in the church he was to build, he charged them that they should tell no man that he was the Christ, for he understood what false conceptions of the functions of the Messiah prevailed, and how easy it would be for the people to misinterpret his claims.

21. From that time—Even the disciples had only a slight appreciation of what was involved in his Messianism. Although he had given intimations of the fact before (Matt. 9. 15; 12. 40; John 2. 19; 3. 14), they seem to have had little idea that, as Messiah, he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer, and be killed.

22. Peter took him—The chief apostle began to exercise his freshly bestowed prerogatives at once. There is a mixture of officiousness and ardent affection in the way he begins to rebuke the Master for his astonishing disclosure of his purpose to die at Jerusalem.

23. Get thee behind me, Satan—One of the fathers ingeniously tried to prove that what was meant was that Peter had been trying to "lead his Leader," and that he must resume his position as a follower behind Christ. But the "Satan" seems to make that idea impossible. In the suggestion of Peter Jesus saw the return of the subtle temptation of the wilderness, to gain his dominion over men in some other way than by the way of the cross.

24-26. Three things are necessary to those who would follow in the train of Christ, the three things that made him a Saviour to the world: (1) Self-denial—to renounce one's own pleasure for the well-being of others and the will of the Father; (2) cross-bearing—to make the saving of one's life secondary to the fulfillment of one's mission; (3) obedience—loyal acknowledgment of the supreme authority of Christ in everything. There is no other way to come after Christ, or to save one's life.

27. For—Introducing a reason for the exhortation to a life of self-denial. Compare the words of Matt. 10. 33. If we deny him, and not self, in this life, then, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, he will deny us.

28. The Son of man coming in his kingdom—At the time Matthew wrote the common belief was that those who were then alive would live until the return of Christ. This may account for the difference in the earlier form of this statement in Mark 9. 1: "The kingdom of God come with power." At any event some of them did live to see not only the transfiguration, but also the destruction of Jerusalem, and the pentecostal baptism, all of which were a coming of the kingdom in power.

A BRIGHT BLACKSMITH.

The greatest improvement in vehicle construction was when some bright blacksmith thought of heating the tires and shrinking them on the wheel. While many claim the honor, it is not known to whom it rightly belongs. Previous to this event tires were made in short sections and held on the felloes with nails. When starting on a long haul the driver always laid in a good supply of nails to use on the tire.

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SOME CAPRICIOUS WILLS

WIVES PUNISHED BY HENPECKED HUSBANDS.

Strange Provisions Which Widows Were Compelled to Carry Out.

"This is where I get my own back." One can almost imagine the henpecked husband, who has borne for years the lash of a shrew's tongue, gleefully making this remark, as, with the aid of a lawyer, he cuts of his wife with the proverbial shilling. What reason it was which led a Midland (England) tradesman recently to leave his wife out of his will altogether, and further stipulate that any expenses she may incur in connection with his will be paid out of her own pocket, and not be charged against his estate, is not known, says London Tit-Bits.

"As for thirty years my wife has never lost an opportunity of lashing me with her tongue," ran a codicil in the will of a Liverpool merchant of a generation ago, "and making me the butt of her vulgar wit, I bequeath to her an annuity of £300 so long as she lives under the same roof with her mother, whose tongue is as poisonous as her own and whom she hates as cordially as she does me; and so long as mother and daughter together visit my grave on the first day of each month, and in the presence of my solicitor, or his deputy, express regret for the unhappiness they have caused me."

RESULT OF JEALOUSY.

Probably, however, the meanest will on record was that of a man who left to his wife the sum of one farthing, with the direction that it should be sent to her by post in an unstamped envelope, complaining that she had called him "an old pig" and other names.

It was probably jealousy, rather than affection, that inspired the

following clause in a will preserved at Somerset House: "Having expiated the errors of a single life by the sorrows of a married one, I now make my will in the full belief that you will outlive me. There are widows, my love, and there are widows. Some rejoice and some do not. Those that do are a discreditable lot. The bare idea of your joining their ranks is so distasteful that to damp any glee you may feel at my death I leave you £10 a year instead of the £100 you expected."

SMILES AND CARESSES.

Jealousy has led to other strange wills. A short time ago a Mr. William Claghorn died in America, possessed of about \$300,000 and a pretty wife. Of her he was inordinately jealous. He left her all his money, however, but stipulated that she should forfeit \$1,000 of the estate each time she appeared in public unveiled, and another \$1,000 each time she smiled at a man. "I do further order that for every time she dances with a man, goes to any gathering for entertainment, amusement, or instruction with a man, that the same sum shall be forfeited, and, further, that if she do permit any coarseness or fashion of endearment, \$5,000 be forfeited."

As a contrast, one might mention the wealthy man who left not a single penny to his widow unless within the space of five years she married again, in which case he bequeathed to her the sum of \$5,000. "My object in making this proviso," continued the testator, "is that some other man may know from experience something of the difficulties I have found from living with her."

LEFT HER NOTHING.

"During my married life," wrote another disillusioned husband, "I have always declared that my wife was the dearest woman in the world, and I am convinced that should anyone be rash enough to marry her after my death he will find her so. To deter, as far as possible, anyone making such a ruinous experiment I leave her nothing."

Vanity appears to have been the besetting sin of the wife of another testator, who left her the sum of \$60,000, to be increased to \$105,000 provided that after his death she wore a widow's cap, which in his lifetime she had stoutly declared she never would wear. "My widow," wrote the disingenuous husband, "would please me greatly by doing this, as I think it would suit her." The good lady, however, was as sharp-witted as she was vain, for after wearing the odious cap for six months she boldly claimed the increased legacy. The matter was brought before a court of law, and to the widow's delight judgment was given in her favor on the ground that the testator had omitted to stipulate that the cap should be worn always. The week after this decision was given the triumphant widow was once more a wife.

A TEN YEARS' PENANCE.

It is happily seldom that the revenge of a disappointed husband takes quite such an extreme form as in the case of the man whose will ran thus: "When I remember that the only happy times I ever enjoyed were when my wife sulked with me, and when I remember that my married life might, for this reason, be considered to have been a fairly happy one because she was nearly always sulking, I am constrained to forget the repulsion the contemplation of her face inspired me with, and leave her the sum of \$300,000 on condition that she undertakes to pass two hours a day at my graveside for the ten years following my decease, in company with her sister, whom I have reason to know she loathes worse than she does myself."

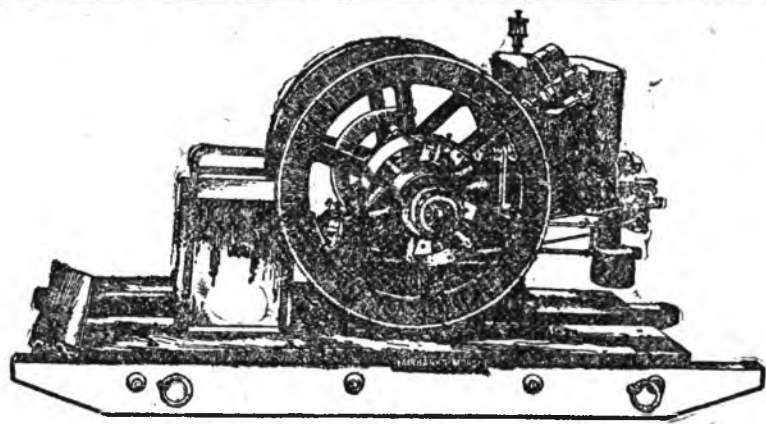
NEVER SAW HER.

The Man—Did you notice that woman we just passed?
The Woman—The one with blond puffs and a military cape, who was dreadfully made up and had awfully soiled gloves on?
The Man—Yes, that one.
The Woman—No, I didn't notice her. Why?

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