

By Mrs. Bessie Wilton

Sunday School Lesson

INTRODUCTION

Vigilante is a word not often complimentary; however, people usually become vigilantes with the best of intentions. A vigilante is, a member of a vigilance committee, and a vigilance committee is a "volunteer committee of citizens for the oversight and protection of an interest, especially a committee organized to suppress and punish crime summarily, as when the processes of law appear inadequate."

On America's Western frontier, when the regular forces of law and order were spread thin and the "wild, wild West" was gaining its reputation, solid citizens formed vigilance committees to deal with murderers and thieves. Their activity offered a significant measure of protection and gained respect. But the vigilantes, unrestrained in relation to the fine points of the law, sometimes perpetrated terror in the name of justice, and they came to be feared as much as respected. They were often the "bad guys" in the final writing of history.

Their position can help us to understand the Pharisees of New Testament times, who appear as the "bad guys" in the lesson today.

LESSON BACKGROUND

A group known as the Hasidaeans arose as a sort of theological vigilance committee among the Jews in the times between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. Concerned with a growing tendency in Jerusalem, they declared an uncompromising devotion to the law of Moses. One phase of this movement became the Pharisees, or "separated ones," a society bound to observe the regulations concerning the Sabbath, tithing, and ceremonial purity. Widely respected for their knowledge of Scripture and their moral purity, they exerted great influence among the people in Jesus' day. But like other vigilantes, the Pharisees developed a sort of "tunnel vision," losing sight of any values outside their own special field, and considered themselves exempt from judgment. Jesus' ministry was offensive to the Pharisees from its beginning. He ignored or rejected their official interpretations of Scripture. He demanded a thorough-going devotion to God, rather than mere conformity in outward actions. He associated with people they considered untouchable. He gained a following that threatened their position as revered religious leaders. This confrontation appears dramatically in the incidents recorded in Mark 2:1, 3:6. These events probably did not occur in quick and direct succession, but all took place rather early in Jesus' public ministry. Mark 2:14-17 - "And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alpheus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, he said unto them, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The objectors were literally "the scribes of the Pharisees." It is doubtful whether they went into Levi's house to observe the goings-on, but they learned of it and raised questions afterwards. To the first available members of Jesus' company they addressed the obvious question: Why should their Master so flout the rules of ceremonial purity? In the Pharisees' eyes, Matthew's guests were unclean.

Are we more Christ-like than the Pharisees were? Consider the reaction if our minister or elders or deacons were seen at dinner parties with the likes of Matthew and his friends.

Jesus heard the complaint, probably from the disciples to whom it had been addressed. His reply was directed to the questioners. He had come as the souls' physician, "to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10). His ministry was to those who recognized their spiritual sickness. Those who considered themselves healthy rejected Him.

A well-known church song asks "Who is on the Lord's side? Who will serve the king?" Its refrain answers confidently, "We are on the Lord's side, Savior, we are Thine." The Pharisees would have sung that theme with great enthusiasm. They wanted to be on God's side, and had no doubt that they were. Unfortunately, they were so preoccupied with sides that they forgot the Lord.



She arrived in a pearl white limousine wearing a white chiffon dress and a grey mink stole; an estimated crowd of 3,000 spectators awaited to greet the newly crowned American queen Pamela Young, "Miss Afro-American." Marching bands, the Coast Guard, college queens, singers, dancers, city and county officials and the Florida Memorial College Ambassador Chorale welcomed Miss Young to the State of Florida in a dazzling ceremony. "A Salute to the Queen." Pamela Mechelle Young who now reigns supreme is a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University of Charlotte, North Carolina. She won the prestigious "Miss Afro-America" title over black campus queens from across the nation. Miss Young said, "Just one week before the pageant, I dreamed that I would win. The Miss Afro-American Pageant proves that dreams really do come true." Pictured above: Pamela Young, "Miss Afro-America" and Metro-Dade Mayor Steven Clark.

Six Blacks Appointed To Citizens Committee

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in structure.

4) Determine where to secure answers to the issues and questions that will be raised.

5) Determine at an early date how the committee will proceed and what monies are needed to fund the committee's work.

6) What proposed time line does the committee feel is necessary before it will be in a position to make its report and recommendations?

7) Analyze the results of other communities that have consolidated and determine whether any have revoked their consolida-

tion.

8) Determine if public hearings should be held before the committee makes its final recommendation to the elected boards.

According to Odom, the committee's evaluation will constitute the first phase in a two-part work program. "Should the committee recommend consolidation of City and County government, the second phase might then begin with appointment of a charter commission to recommend the form for a single government that would meet local needs," he concluded.



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