

Sowing and Reaping

MAY 9.

JOHN IV. : 27-42.

Golden Text, John 4 : 37.

WHILE Jesus sat resting by the well, his disciples had gone into the town of Sychar to purchase food, the opportunity was thus afforded for the quiet talk with the woman of Samaria. Just as the conversation had reached its climax by Christ's announcement of his Messiahship, the disciples returned from the city. V. 27. *They marvelled.* The relations of the sexes was very strict among the Jews. That a woman should be seen unveiled was deemed immodest. Talking with a woman in public was forbidden as "highly indecorous." But Jesus had come to convert this woman, and to make her an instrument for the conversion of many others, and neither the traditions of the Rabbis nor the prudish etiquette of Jewish society would prevent him. He had already honoured her with his confidence and by this act had elevated the sex to the position of social equality with man. V. 28. *The woman left.*—The presence of strangers made her feel that it was time for her to withdraw and, besides, so deeply impressed was she by the interview, she could not remain longer and was glad of the opportunity to hasten home as fast as she could and tell her friends what she had seen and heard. The living spring within her heart was already welling up and ready to overflow. V. 29. *Come, see Isa. 2 : 3 ; Num. 10 : 29.* The very form of expression used by Christ himself, Matt. 11 : 28. It is said that when travelling in the deserts one is sent in front of the caravan to look out for water, and that as soon as it is found he shouts aloud, "Come!" The one nearest to him repeats the word, "Come!" and then the next, until the wilderness echoes with the word. So in the Scriptures, Rev. 22 : 17. *Is not this the Christ?*—It seemed to her as almost too good news to be true; but, "Come and judge for yourselves." The missionary spirit in this woman deserves special notice. It is the natural impulse of an awakened and renewed soul to bring others under the same influence. Andrew findeth his own brother, and Philip his friend Nathaniel, ch. 1 : 41, 45. Do likewise, Heb. 13 : 16, James 5 : 20. V. 35—38. As Jesus saw the townspeople coming he points to them as the noblest harvest—a willing people come to hear words of eternal life. The disciples should reap the fruit of his sowing and not only he and they but all heaven shall rejoice. Luke 15 : 10. Vs. 39-42. Two precious days these to the Saviour! No miracle was wrought; but, convinced by his supernatural knowledge and his winning method of presenting the truth, many believed. Courage S. S. Teacher! Keep on sowing the good seed. In due time you shall reap, 2 Cor. 9 : 6 ; Gal. 6 : 9.

The Nobleman's Son

MAY 16.

JOHN IV. : 43-54.

Golden Text, John 4 : 50.

AFTER the two notable days near Shechem, Jesus passed on northward to Galilee. He would go by the way of Samaria, then a splendid city, and continuing his journey through the plain of Esdraelon, leaving Nazareth on the left hand, he came to Cana, the scene of his first miracle, ch. 2. *Galilee*, the most northern of the three provinces into which Palestine was then divided, was noted for beauty and fertility. Its population was dense, numbering between 2 and 3 millions. It had a mixed population. Jews were numerous, less strict, however, in their religious observances than those of Judea and, as we have seen, less bigoted. V. 44. *His own country*—probably refers to Nazareth, where he was brought up, Luke 4 : 16. V. 45. Many of the Galileans had attended the Passover feast at Jerusalem, ch. 2 : 12, 13 and would bring back wonderful accounts of what they had seen and heard about Jesus at that time; this, without implying that they had been converted, would account for the favourable reception which he now met with in the quiet village of Cana. V. 46. *A nobleman*—An officer in the service of Herod the Tetrarch, Math. 14 : 1, who had a palace at Tiberias on the sea of Galilee, a few miles south of Capernaum, which now became the headquarters of our Lord and the scene of many of his miracles and discourses, Matt. 9 : 1 ; 11 : 23. V. 47. Capernaum was over 20 miles from Cana, which shows that Christ's fame had spread over a wide area. The man's going so far evidenced some faith in Christ's power to heal his son. Vs. 48, 49. *Except ye see signs.*—This was a marked trait of the Jewish character which Christ often rebuked, Matt. 12 : 38, 39; and this remark may not now have been intended *especially* for the nobleman, but for the people generally. The nobleman shewed intense earnestness by repeating his request; Luke 11 : 9, 10. V. 50. *He believed*—This was a very high exercise of faith, such as few people in like circumstances would have reached. Suppose the case were your own, would that answer have fully satisfied you? Vs. 51-53. He was in no hurry to go home now. The next day he receives the joyful tidings,—*Thy son liveth*—it was more than a sudden recovery, corresponding to the very moment when Christ had spoken the word, it was a notable miracle, and the man knew it, but, best of all, not only himself, but his whole family also were brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, and all because they had been visited with sickness. Had that son not been at the point of death, none of the family might have "believed." Lam. 3 : 32, 33 ; Rom. 8 : 28.