

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLETHE NORMAL ACTIVITIES OF OUR
LORD.

By Professor James Stalker, D.D.

In an Introduction to the Writings of the New Testament, which has just been published in English but has for several years been looked upon as one of the glories of recent German scholarship, as, indeed, it is an honor to the theological learning of this age, the author, Professor Zahn of Erlangen, thus sums up his account of the contents and plan of the Gospel we are now studying: "If the preceding summary of the principal thoughts of the book is in the main correct, we must admit that the work is exceedingly rich in its content, that it is constructed according to a plan, and that this plan is carried out to the smallest detail. In greatness of conception, and in the power with which a mass of material is subordinated to great ideas, no writing in either Testament, dealing with a historical theme, is to be compared with Matthew. In this respect the present writer would be at a loss to find its equal also in the other literature of antiquity."

This author divides the book into six sections—(1) Chapters 1 and 2, Birth and Infancy of Jesus; (2) from chapter 3: 1 to 4: 11, Preparatory Events; (3) 4: 12 to 11: 1, Public Work in Galilee; (4) 11: 2 to 20: 34, Different Impressions made on Different Persons and Classes; (5) 21: 1 to 25: 46, Last Work in Jerusalem; (6) chapters 26 to 28, Passion and Resurrection of our Lord. If with this division, which might be slightly varied by other scholars, be compared the lessons for the first quarter, which we have to review to-day, it will be seen that these nearly cover sections second and third; though two of the lessons of next quarter will still be taken from the third section.

Zahn's designation of the contents of his second section as Preparatory Events is perfectly appropriate, because they include the movement of the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, and the temptation of Jesus, which were all obviously connected with one another, as well as with the public work of Christ, which followed. Jesus' own baptism is of special importance; because, at this crisis, he not only becomes fully conscious of his own vocation as Messiah, but was endowed, through the descent on him of the Holy Spirit, with all the powers necessary for sustaining so great a part. The section which follows, and from which the majority of the lessons for the past quarter have been taken, is intended to describe, in its main outlines, the Messianic activity which immediately ensued; and the chief features of it are four—preaching, miracles, journeys, disciples. Of these features three are emphasized in the Golden Text for this lesson; and all four would be comprehended, if the words were added which will be found in Luke 8:1, in a similar summary, "And the twelve were with him." These four features may serve as means of reviewing this section; only, it will be convenient to take them in reverse order:

1. Disciples.—To the calling of these, references will be found in chapter 4: 18-21 and 9:3; but, as the subject will come before us more fully in a lesson belonging to the next quarter, we may pass it lightly here. Only let it be considered that one of the best means of doing good is to enlist others in the ranks of the soldiers of Christ. Thus may be brought into the field those who will do more extensive service than ourselves. Many a humble and unknown Christian has become the sunk pillar on which has been elevated into visibility and prominence one who has attained to great name and wide influence.

2. Journeys.—The far-extended journeyings of Jesus are prominent in this part of his career, and they will be still more prominent later. For various reasons it is the lot of some to travel extensively in their native land or in foreign lands. This ought to be the occasion of doing good to many; and it will be, if we follow the example of Jesus and do not leave our religion at home, when we go away from home.

3. Miracles.—The number and variety of these in this section have frequently attracted our attention; and special notice has been taken of the part played by faith in securing the benefits of the power of Jesus; but opportunity might be found on review Sunday of enlarging on the miracles generally—their different kinds, of which something has been said in a former lesson, and the reasons for working them. Perhaps the primary reason was to sustain the authority of Christ, by proving that God was on his side and was well pleased with his work. Another lofty object was to illustrate what Christ could do for the soul by what he did for the body, and what he was able to effect in the world unseen by showing what he was capable of doing in this visible world. But a humbler motive must not be lost sight of—how much he was influenced by sheer pity for the miserable. In this we can imitate him. Medical science can now do many things which in the first century could only have been done through miracle, and social science is finding out ways of preventing misery far more extensive in their operation than ever the miracles of the New Testament. The addresses of the Judge to those on the right hand and on the left, in the twenty-fifth of Matthew, show how we can best be instructed by the miracles of Jesus.

4. Preaching.—The words of Jesus, in this section, are the most important feature of the record; as, indeed, Matthew everywhere is specially valuable as a preserver of the sayings of his Master. Never elsewhere, however, does even he rise quite to the level of the Sermon on the Mount; and in the other Gospels there is nothing which quite equals this in value, unless it be the parables of the fifteenth of Luke or the discourses and the prayer of the upper room in John. Not only is there a profusion of priceless single sayings in the Sermon on the Mount, but the very essence of our Lord's teachings may here be found on such cardinal themes as Blessedness and Righteousness.—Sunday School Times.

God bless the little children; we meet them everywhere,
We hear their voices round our hearth,
their footsteps on the stair;
Their kindly hearts are swelling o'er
with mirthfulness and glee,
God bless the little children wherever
they may be.

—Western Christian Advocate

The holiest of all holidays are those
Kept by ourselves, in silence and apart,
The secret anniversaries of the heart,
When sudden joys do out of darkness
start

As flames from ashes.

It is always a mistake to suppose
that the discovery of a fault in another's
character is equivalent to finding
a virtue in one's own.

Truth is seldom found on the extremes.
Somewhere between the elder
brother's field and the younger
brother's swine-farm is located the father's house.

Conscience appears to have a three-fold office. First, it is a witness, testifying what we have done; second, a judge, passing sentence upon what we have done; third, it in some sort executes the sentence by complicity in the evil-doer, and uneasiness in the evil-doer.—Wesley.

WHY FAITH I THE MIRACLES?

Faith is more a matter of experience than of reason; therefore faith is within the grasp of all, whether their reasoning powers be small or great. For all may, if they will, test out or experience for themselves the power of Christ, by doing his will. The question of belief in the miracles of Jesus is just now being learnedly discussed. People are asking whether belief in the miracles is essential to faith in Christ. They miss the fact that they are putting the cart before the horse when they even ask that question. The truth lies in just the opposite direction. We do not believe in Christ because of our belief in the miracles, but we believe in the miracles because of our belief in Christ. Men are not led to Christ through their belief in the miracles, but men see the inevitable reasonableness of the miracles when they believe in Christ. This is well illustrated by a few sentences in a letter from one of the greatest of living surgeons, Dr. Howard A. Kelly, of Johns Hopkins. He writes: "It has seemed to me that the strongest argument against unbelief is always 'credo,' which in its analysis of course simply means, 'I see a great light.' The reasonableness of our faith, I think, is often a question of subsequent investigation. Take, for example, the Gospel of St. John: all the scientists in all the world, and ten thousand documents, could not convince me that that book is a forgery. I apply to it exactly the same process I apply to my mother's affection—I KNOW IT." It would help many of us if we should think less about our faith, and do more with it.—S. S. Times.

IGNORANCE OR SELFISHNESS.

Is it really ignorance which causes many a father and mother to say, "I don't know how to train my children," or is it just plain selfishness? Is it because parents do not know what to do that so many children grow up almost without training, or is it because the parents are unwilling to use the time and strength necessary to the successful accomplishment of that sacred task? In these busy days, it is natural enough that overworked fathers and mothers should seek their own comfort in their own homes and should "not want to be bothered with children," but such parents might well be guarded in their expressions of affection for their offspring. Love seeketh not her own.

WELCOMING THE SCALPEL.

When a man is attacked for his loyalty to the Bible and Bible truth, he has a right to feel encouraged. The Bible begins to mean something to him then; and he begins to mean something to the Kingdom. Such an attack is evidence that he is really alive. For, as a well-known defender and expounder of the Bible as God's Word has keenly said: "The Bible is a living thing; and when it gets into you and your life, you'll be under the scalpel of every little critic." Criticism is not a thing to be sought; but when it comes as a result of getting the Bible into our blood, it is not to be feared. Are you intimate enough with the Bible to invite such criticism?

Take life like a man. Take it as though it was—as it is—an earnest vital, essential affair. Take it just as though you were born to the task of performing a merry part in it—as though the world had waited your coming. Take it as though it were a grand opportunity to achieve, to carry forward great and good schemes, to hold and to cheer a suffering, weary, it may be broken-hearted brother.—Charles H. Spurgeon.