

recline upon the soft, yielding couches. They reach out their hands to the feast spread upon the tables. You catch the sound of the hurrying footsteps of the servants, the rattle of the dishes, the laugh of the guests, or the notes of merry music. Suddenly it is announced that there is no wine. No wine? Mary looks at Jesus. She significantly says, "They have no wine." But not yet is the Saviour's hour. Perhaps Mary has risen from her couch, for she is whispering to the servants that they do the bidding of Jesus. She has such confidence in this strange Son, whose history has been attended by such revelations of power. Six water-pots of stone, six large pots, and Jesus bids that they be filled with water. What for? It may seem strange that a guest should give the order. Besides, it is wine, not water, that is needed. Do any of the servants demur? No. They have not forgotten the words of Mary. And how anxiously Mary is watching her son and the six pots of stone. Hear the water running, gurgling and splashing into the pots! The guests—have

they risen now, and do they gather around the bustling servants as they empty their water-skins? The water has deepened in the pots to their very brim, and the people in silence and wonder look at the cool, sparkling surfaces. What does he say, the Great Teacher, Master? "Draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast!" Moment of deep suspense! Mary so eagerly is looking on. Every guest is curiously leaning forward to see what will come from the pots of stone. Jesus alone is calm. What will come from the pots of stone? Was not water poured in? Where are vine-clusters to hold and sun to sweeten and soil to stimulate the juice that shall fill the drinking-cups at the wedding feast? Ah, better than vine or sun or soil is the Creator who made all these, and now tell the water to do his bidding. But the pot of stone is yielding up its beverage; and as it comes into the light it is—*it is wine as if within the pot a vine's pulpy clusters of purple had just been pressed!* O that power attending the beneficence and attesting the divinity of Jesus!

A. D. 27.]

## LESSON IV. JESUS AND NICODEMUS.

[April 25.]

John 3.1-18.

[Commit to memory verses 14-16.]



1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

## General Statement.

From Cana Jesus went to Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. His mother and younger brothers accompanied him, and also the little band of his followers, most of whom lived near by. They remained here but a few days, and then Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, with the throng of pilgrims, to celebrate the great Feast of Passover. Perhaps it was his purpose to begin his public ministry at the capital of the nation, in the hope that the leaders and people would rally around him, and accept him as their Messiah. He entered the temple, and found its outer courts resounding with the noise of trade, beasts and birds for sacrifice being sold, and the tables of the money-changers standing on every side. With the authority of a prince in his Father's house, he broke in upon the confusion, drove out the buyers and the sellers, and made the Gentiles' Court, at least for a time, as holy as the inner

halls. But his act aroused against him the bitterest enmity from the classes having an interest in the profanation of the temple—priests whose perquisites he had interfered with, scribes whose shortcomings he had exposed, and merchants whose wicked gains he had stopped. All interests combined against him, and believers in him were few. His miracles awakened curiosity, but failed to inspire a true faith. Among the ruling classes there were, however, a few who were awakened to interest. One of these was Nicodemus, a man timid by nature, and slow in spiritual perception, but bearing in his heart the germ of a faith which should one day blossom out in noblest confession. This man came to Jesus by night, and received from the Great Teacher the revelation of one of the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, that of the new birth by faith in Christ.

## Explanatory and Practical Notes.

**Verse 1. The Pharisees.** A party or sect among the Jews which undertook to fulfill the law of Moses to the very letter, and in its devotion to the letter too often neglected the spirit. Some of them were earnest, godly men, but others were self-seeking and hypocritical.

**Nicodemus.** We know of this man only what is related here, in John 7. 50, where he is named as a half-defender of Jesus, and in John 19. 39, where he is mentioned as taking part in the burial of Jesus. He was an

honest seeker after truth, but dull in his spiritual apprehension, and timid in confessing Christ. Yet he was sincerely attached to the Saviour, and at the last braved danger by aiding in his burial. **A ruler of the Jews.** The Jews were at this time under Roman authority, and governed by a procurator appointed by the emperor. But it was according to Roman policy to interfere as little as possible with existing forms of administration, and hence the Sanhedrin, or Jewish council of seventy