

Sept. 23.

Daniel's Abstinence.

Les. Daniel 1: 8-20
Mem. vs. 8, 9.

Gol. Text, Dan. 1: 8.
Catechism Q. 95.

Last lesson, at Jacob's well, contrasted natural water with "living water"; "thirsting again" with "never thirst." This lesson in the palace at Babylon looks in the opposite direction and contrasts natural water, Daniel's drink, with "death water"; for as certainly as he who drinketh of the water that Christ gives shall never thirst, so surely "no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Babylon's soldiers had invaded Israel. The boy Daniel and many others, saw their homes rudely broken up. The weak and aged, unable to travel, were either killed or left behind with none to care for them, while the strong and well were driven off in bands by the conquerors. What cruel partings!

Then who can tell the hardships of that march as with poor food and little of it, tired and hungry, the captives marched wearily on, day after day, until they reached Babylon.

Then there would be a great slave auction, people would gather from far and near to bid for them, and there would be further cruel partings.

The king wanted some of the brightest and best boys for his own service, and Daniel, a lad of about fifteen or sixteen, and three others, were chosen. Feed them well said the king, that they may look fat and well, just as if he were talking of fancy cattle or sheep.

Daniel knew that plain living and high thinking go together, that dainties and strong drinks do not make strong bodies or clear heads, but muddle both; and he asked for plainer fare, and after a trial of a few days, he and his friends got it.

The dainty food and rich wine would be a great temptation to them, because all boys like to eat that which tastes good, but Daniel looked beyond the mere pleasure of eating. Some of the meats would be forbidden by Jewish law, and he would not deny the customs of his fathers. Some of it too would be offered in sacrifice to idols to get a blessing upon the remainder, and he did not wish to share, even to that extent, in idolatry. Then as to the wine, he knew the danger of touching it, how the appetite grows till it masters, and he determined to avoid all temptation. He would be laughed at and called a crank and a fanatic, and he would feel such things, but he preferred to do what he thought right and pleasing to God, no matter what men might say.

1. Yielding to appetite in eating enslaves the soul.

2. Sixty thousand every year, or nearly two millions from each generation, die a drunkard's death. Sixty thousand boys every year, or nearly two millions of boys from each generation are required to supply their places.

2. Are you doing what you can to stop this awful procession of captives, driven, not to Babylon, but to death.

30th Sept.

Review.

A wonderful picture is the review of the quarter's twelve lessons on the life of Christ, beginning with Angel song and shepherd wonder among the hills of Bethlehem, and ending with a lonely, weary traveller, sitting on the curb stone of Jacob's well, telling a poor, sinful, heart-weary woman, of rest and peace, while the intervening ten lessons are the outstanding points, on which, as on so many piers, rests this part of His life story.

The first four lessons have to do with His infancy, one with his boyhood and youth, and the last seven with the seven chief recorded events of the first year of His public ministry, viz., His baptism, temptation, calling His first disciples, first miracle at Cana, cleansing the temple, interview with Nicodemus, and with the woman of Samaria.

7th Oct.

Jesus at Nazareth.

Les. Luke 4: 16-30.
Mem. vs. 16-19.

Gol. Text, Heb. 12: 25.
Catechism Q. 96.

The last seven lessons of last quarter dealt with the first year of Christ's public ministry, the "year of beginnings." Eleven lessons of this quarter are in the second year of His ministry, the "year of developments."

Except a short visit to Jerusalem to the Passover, the second year of His ministry was spent in the Province of Galilee, just as a large part of the previous year had been given to Judea. The narrative of this second year is found chiefly in the first three Gospels.

There are nearly four months between last lesson and this one. We left Him at Jacob's well, in December, on His way north. After this He visited Capernaum, and says one, "the disciples depart to their homes, and He lives in retirement till March, when he goes to the feast of the Passover," where also He works some miracles.

He then returns to Galilee and begins the public work of this second year, by preaching in His own home village, Nazareth, as told in this lesson.

Living among them and working for them until about a year previous to this it was hard for them to see in Him the Messiah, and so after working the miracle at Cana in their neighbourhood, He had remained away for about a year to allow them to get used to the idea of His great claim.

The synagogue was partly an open service. Any who wished could take part. When Jesus began to speak and to tell them who He was, He said "you will want miracles here, as a proof of my claim. But the great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, did no miracles among their own people but only among strangers, and so I am but following them when I do no miracles here."

When they heard this they were furious. Would He compare them to Gentiles and lepers, or speak of them in the same breath, and they rushed upon Him, hustled Him out of the synagogue, and up to a steep rock to throw Him over.

But look! They fall back! He calmly walks through them and away. He gave them an opportunity. They rejected it. Once again, some month's later, He visited them, received the same treatment, and returned to them no more.

1. Note how prophecy is fulfilled in Christ.
2. What glad tidings the Gospel is for the poor, how it brightens dark, sad lives.
3. How foolish to be angry with the preacher because we do not like the message.

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