

prospect. Excusing myself for these brief and hurried notes,

I am yours truly,  
Pictou, September. A. W. H.

## The Sabbath School.

### LESSONS FOR NOVEMBER.

#### FIRST SABBATH.

**SUBJECT:**—*The fig-tree withered*, Mark 11: 12–13, 19–24. Golden text, Luke 12–13. Parallel passage, Rom. 2, 4; 2nd Peter, 3, 9; Luke 6, 46.

This is one of the only two miracles of our Lord which have in them an element of severity, and it is well to note that when he put forth his power to destroy, it was not exerted against any human being, but, in the one case, against a fig-tree, and in the other, against a herd of swine. In both cases, indeed, his primary object was purely benevolent, as it was to teach mankind solemn and important truths.

Consider first, *the subject of the miracle*. A fig-tree covered with leaves. Usually the fruit of this tree appears before the leaves, and as "the time of figs"—that is, the time of gathering figs, was not yet, the hungry traveller had reason to expect that he would find on it some ripe fruit. Some trees have been made for the purpose of delighting the eye with their foliage; but the Lord had made this tree to bear fruit, but when he had need of it, notwithstanding its pretentious appearance, it failed to fulfil the end of its being.

2ndly.—*The circumstances of the Saviour*. Jesus had not partaken of any food before leaving the house of Matthew. His remaining time was short, and he wished to work while it was day. It was considered unbecoming to take the first meal before the hour of the morning sacrifice, which was nine o'clock; and if he had waited till then, he would not have reached Jerusalem till eleven.

3rdly.—*The sentence*. Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. It was not to be blasted by lightning, or to be consumed by fire, or to be plucked up by the roots. Its fault was to become its punishment. It was to be sealed up in its own barrenness. All the agencies which had so long failed to make it bear were now to cease their action. The sun, the rain, and the soil, were no longer to exert their life-sustaining power, and the foliage which was so useful and so deceptive, was to perish from its branches.

4thly.—*The execution of the sentence*. The elements which had been commissioned to fulfil their Master's purpose had done their work so speedily as to excite the astonishment of the disciples. When they went out to Bethany in the evening, it was probably too dark for them to observe the

change; but when they again passed by next morning, they saw that the fig-tree was withered from the root up. The last vestige of life had departed.

5thly.—*The lesson taught*. One by what Jesus said, another by what he had done. The first was called forth by the feeling which predominated in the minds to the Apostles. They wondered, not why, but how, this change was brought about in the fig-tree. He tells them that they must have faith, and that this would enable them even to remove mountains—not probably material mountains, which it would never be any advantage for them to remove, but those mountains of sin and unbelief, which would obstruct the progress of His cause.

To us, who have more light than the Apostles at this time enjoyed, the wonder will be, not how, but why, he cursed the fig-tree. We know that it was not done in anger, and that he could not really have been disappointed when he came and found no fruit. He once spake a parable in which he represented the barren tree as being spared for a season in the hope that it might become fruitful. Now, he acts a parable, to show that the threatened destruction will surely come. What a striking emblem is the barren tree, both in the spoken and in the acted parable, of the barren professor, having, like the tree, all the appearance of vigorous life—actively participating, it may be, in ordinary church business, perhaps leading in devotional exercises, or even high in office—but not having the love of God in his heart, and bringing forth no fruit unto holiness. The first teaches the long-suffering of God—the second shows that it will not last for ever. How remarkably does the fate of the tree point out the way in which He will deal with professors who bear "nothing but leaves." He has to say to his spirit, "Arise, let us go hence"; the influences which have been so long resisted will no longer operate, and the poor, forsaken soul, left to be the prey of its own passions, will perish for ever. How solemn the warning to all who hear the sound of the gospel.

#### SECOND SABBATH.

**SUBJECT:**—*The Two Commandments*, Mark 12: 28–34. Parallel passage, Matt. 22: 34–40. Golden text.

The enemies of Christ tried to entrap Him in His talk, but without success. Several such attempts are recorded in this chapter. In verse 18th we read certain of the Pharisees and the Herodians were sent "to catch Him in His words." In verse 18th we find that the Sadducees tried to puzzle Him concerning the doctrine of the Resurrection. In the passage before us is recorded a similar attempt, but in this case the questioning concerned the relative value of the commandments.

V. 28.—This scribe belonged to the class of the Pharisees, for Matthew says he was "a lawyer from among them," who acted as their spokesman, when they made a second