



## LESSON II.—APRIL 9.

## The Raising of Lazarus.

John xi., 32-45.

## Golden Text.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life. John xi., 25.

Commit verses 33-36.

## Home Readings.

Monday, April 3.—John xi., 32-45.

Tuesday, April 4.—John xi., 20-31.

Wednesday, April 5.—Luke vii., 11-23.

Thursday, April 6.—I. Kings xvii., 15-24.

Friday, April 7.—II. Kings iv., 18-20, 30-37.

Saturday, April 8.—Acts ix., 36-43.

Sunday, April 9.—Acts xx., 7-12.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

The white walls of a villa peer through the thick foliage of the olives on the eastern slope of Olivet. It is the home of comfort and love, but deeply shadowed now. Out of that courtyard lately came a funeral train. The body, carried on a bier, was swathed in linen bands. There were the discordant notes of flutes and hired wailers. The director had thrice halted the procession to comfort the mourners. An egg had been broken—sign of mortality, and Moses' psalm chanted, and the body laid on the rocky shelf in the grotto. The stone had been rolled across the mouth of the sepulchre, and all whitened to remind the inadvertent not to approach within four cubits on penalty of ceremonial defilement.

The saddest part of it, the return, had been accomplished. During the absence of the mourners assiduous hands had overturned the couches and strewn broken pottery about to symbolize distraction. The sisters sit now with veiled faces and dust upon their heads and unsanded feet, break their fast with only eggs and lentils, while throngs pay their stiff visits of condolence. Every casual word the bereaved sisters speak makes a mournful refrain. Every time they steal away to the tomb to weep they are persistently followed by those who make merchandise of their condolence. In this instance, as in most, there is that ever-recurring 'if.' If so and so, our brother would not have died. That 'if' is a very inquisitor's instrument.

The fourth day had come—that fatal fourth day after death—when, according to Jewish notion, the spirit which until then hovers about the corpse, sees the signs of decay in the face, and takes its final departure. Only then did Jesus come. This delay was not, however, at the expense of Lazarus and his sisters. The spiritual gains to them were incalculable. At the same time it gave Jesus opportunity to work his transcendent miracle.

Martha goes impetuously to meet the Master and utters her plaintive 'if.' Her faith sweeps out to embrace the hope of her brother's immediate restoration. But when Jesus seems to confirm the hope it as quickly recedes. We can forgive Martha that, since it drew from the Saviour's lips that majestic affirmation which has heartened the dying and bereaved in every generation since. Now Mary summoned, comes with stronger, though unexpressed, faith. She is followed by her guests of condolence. Thus the miracle is furnished with witnesses certainly not prejudiced in favor of the Worker.

A great surge of sorrow breaks upon Jesus' heart, in the effort to control which he shakes and groans. It gives place to tenderest sympathy for the bereaved and that great company of mourners they represent in each succeeding age. His tears cause favorable remark. But a discordant note is also struck by those who wish to discount the recent miracle

in Jerusalem by Jesus' failure to avert this event. Martha's faith also shrinks back as she protests against uncovering the putrescence of the tomb; but Jesus encourages her to believe and see the glory of God.

When the stone is rolled away, Jesus, with uplifted eyes, joyously acknowledges the assurance he has received that what he is about to do meets with the Father's approval. Both prayer and miracle are designed to quicken the faith of those who hear and see.

Then he, who is both Life and Resurrection, in a voice of indisputable authority, bids the sleeper awake. He speaks and it is done. Lazarus 'stands forth fresh and free without a taint upon him of the chill and horrors of the tomb.'

## LIGHTS ON THE LESSON.

The eleventh chapter of John is not surpassed in pictorialness. Sixty years after the evangelist had no difficulty in reproducing the scene from the negative plate of memory.

Love caused delay. 'Jesus loved. Therefore when he heard he abode two days still.' Rushing to the rescue is not always the kindest act, though it may be harder to stand off and see the suffering. Great were the gains to Lazarus and his sisters of this apparent loss.

The inefficiency of human sources of comfort is well shown by the mourners 'for revenue' and the condolence visitors in the home at Bethany.

The resurrection and immortal life are not far-off abstractions. They are concreted in an immanent Christ. Those who are joined to him, whether dead or living (as we use the words), live (in the higher meaning which Jesus has put into the Word). The dead in Christ have not lost the living can not lose this immortal life. He that hath the Son hath life.

Jesus here, as his custom was, associated others with him in the working of the miracle. Human hands did all they could. They rolled away the stone and unwound the cements. Men can be co-workers with God in spiritual resurrections to-day.

In this transcendent scene Jesus is the commanding figure. Calm, deliberate, majestic, he stands the conscious victor over death, hades, and the grave. Jesus' self was greater than his deed.

This was Jesus' climactic miracle. It inspired the ovation of the 'triumphal entrance,' and prompted Mary to anoint Jesus. It also set hell on fire to compass his death.

## NOTES FROM COMMENTARIES.

As the man who had been blind promised Jesus beforehand that he would believe on the Son of God, because he more than suspected Jesus to be He, so do such souls as Peter's and Martha's believe (in their several ways) beforehand in that eternal life of which the words of Jesus speak, without comprehending all at once the when, the where, the how, or the secrets of God's power in the resurrection.—Stier. Groaned in spirit: The tears of Mary acting sympathetically upon Jesus and drawing forth his emotions.—J. F. B. Was troubled: troubled himself: Referring to this visible difficulty of repressing his emotions.—J. F. B. Jesus wept: What a seal of his perfect oneness with us!—J. F. B. It is abolishing one of the finest traits of Jesus' character to say that he wept here because of sin and its consequences. Humanity, unadulterated as Jesus had it is generous and sympathetic.—Clark. Could not this man: They maliciously considered Jesus' tears as proof of his weakness.—Ibid. How he loved him: The human softness of the Son of God.—J. F. B. Could not this man: Betokens a measure of suspicion; disposition to dictate to Divine power.—J. F. B. Take away the stone: Forbidden to open a grave after the stone was placed upon it.—Talmud. Sister of the dead: As such the guardian of the remains. Dead four days: To such fluctuations all real faith is subject in dark hours.—J. F. B. I thank Thee. Instead of praying he gives thanks for answer to prayer offered before he left Perea.—J. F. B. Loose him: The life-giving act alone he reserves to himself.—J. F. B. The people which stand by: There stood collective humanity waiting in spirit at the grave of Lazarus; and the grave question whether God would or would not hear his only begotten, whether he would authenticate or desert the work of Christ; whether he would confirm or bring to naught his once-uttered word, must here be decided.—Haustein.

## C. E. Topic.

Sunday, April 9.—Topic—What does Christ's life show us about the Father? John xiv., 6-24.

## Junior C. E. Topic.

## NADAB AND ABIHU.

Monday, April 3.—The altar of incense. Ex. xxx., 1-6.

Tuesday, April 4.—The fire on the altar. Ex. xxx., 8-10.

Wednesday, April 5.—Disobedience. Lev. x., 1.

Thursday, April 6.—Do not drink wine. Lev. x., 9.

Friday, April 7.—'Not given to wine.' Tit. i., 7, 8.

Saturday, April 8.—'Nor to drink wine.' Rom. xiv., 17-21.

Sunday, April 9.—Topic—The story of Nadab and Abihu. Lev. x., 1-10. (Temperance meeting.)

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