

their names with his, making them teachers of the people, defending them against their opponents, aiding them in their infirmities; and now he expected them to stand by him—to confess and honor him before men. This was right and manly. Who wants it all on his own side? Who is not willing to give and take? Who, if at all brave, does not wish to bear his share of the risk?

Jesus requires much of us, but we should remember that he gives more to us than any one else. He estimates himself highly in the language, "He that taketh not up his cross daily is not worthy of me." Remember that on the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah were sent to confer with Jesus about his death, and were then recalled. God commanding Peter, James, and John to "hear Christ" (Matt. 17). None stood so high in heaven as Jesus. Only he sits at God's right hand. Only he was able to unseal the book (Rev. 5. 1-5). Only he could bring the world redemption. It is due, therefore, to Jesus that we should confess him. After all that he has done for us, it is shameful to deny him. After all that God has done to confirm him as the Christ, he will punish us if we do not recognize the divine provision.

A.D. 28.] LESSON VII. [Nov. 13.

CHRIST'S WITNESS TO JOHN.

Matt. 11. 2. 15. Gold. Text, John 5. 35.

No details are given of the mission of the twelve, except that they went on a circuit through the towns and villages of Galilee, preaching the need of repentance and the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Their ministry was accompanied with miraculous works of mercy, such as casting out demons, and anointing those who were sick and healing them, which were proofs of their ministry to those who witnessed them in faith. How long this mission lasted is uncertain. It may have embraced weeks or even months, though, as the first journey of the Twelve, it could not have been protracted. The success must have been unusual, for, as they appeared, two and two, in the villages of Galilee, the name of Jesus was on every tongue. Jesus himself had not been idle while his followers were away, for their departure was the signal for a new and solitary journey, to preach and teach in the various cities (Matt. 11. 1). He had been nearly two years before the world, and had steadily risen in popular favor in spite of the party of priests and scribes who opposed him. His claims became the engrossing topic of the day. Hitherto his strange views had perplexed all alike, and yet he was so honest in his avowal of them, and so truthful in his life, that the impression he had made was vast and deep. Herod himself, who had beheaded John, was troubled in conscience concerning Jesus, believing him to be the murdered man risen from the dead (chap. 14. 2). Others formed an opinion respecting him hardly more acute or

They said he was either Elijah or

Jeremiah, or at least one of the prophets (chap. 16. 14). Thus their minds were fixed on him and his teaching; and although they had queer ideas concerning them, sensation was better than stagnation—there was hope for a modification of thought as they should learn more of him.

The statement (verse 2) that John heard "in the prison" of the works of Jesus, recalls Matthew's previous remark (4. 12) that Jesus, "when he heard that John was delivered up," withdrew into Galilee. Josephus informs us, in his account of the death of John, that this prison was at Macherus, east of the Dead Sea, and on the border between Herod's dominions and those of the king of Arabia (*Antiquities*, B. 18, c. 5. §§ 1, 2). Here Herod had a strongly fortified castle. The ruins of this castle have been visited with great interest by some recent travellers, among whom Canon Tristram was the first from the shores of Great Britain. He was there in 1872, and he gives an account of his visit in his excellent work, "The Land of Moab." The castle was perched on the summit of a mountain with precipitous sides, and under a circular tower one hundred yards in diameter. Tristram found two dungeons, on the walls of which were still traceable the holes in which staples of wood and iron were fixed to receive the chains of prisoners. There is scarcely any ground for doubt that in one of these John the Baptist was confined. When last seen in the gospel narrative before his imprisonment, John was at Enon, which was in the territory of the Samaritans, and not many miles from Shechem. It is probable that he left this place and returned to the east bank of the Jordan, within Herod's dominion, before he was arrested.

1. Faith grows by exercise. It is difficult for an earnest nature to be still. Doubts and despair come to the soul that is left to brood in idleness. John, so lofty in his faith in the freedom of the wilderness and the high activities of his ministry, sinks into doubt and discouragement when shut up in prison (2, 3).

2. The works that Jesus did are sufficient proofs that he came from God (4, 5).

3. Greater than all miracles—the climax of all wonders—is the fact that "the poor had the gospel preached unto them" (5). In this, more than in all else, did the divine philanthropy shine forth.

4. Blessed indeed are they who find no occasion of stumbling in the meekness, the poverty, the purity, the compassion, the philanthropy, of Jesus. He has no charms to the carnal, the ambitious, the selfish, the sin-loving; but to the sin-sick, the crushed spirit, the conscience writhed with guilt and terror, he is "altogether lovely" (6).

5. Admirable in the eyes of Jesus were the unbending firmness and the self-denying austerity of John the Baptist (7, 8). Would you receive the blessing of the Son of God? Then be not vacillating, and abandon not yourself to pride, gaiety, and luxury.