

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubets' Notes.

First Quarter.

JESUS AT JACOB'S WELL.

Lesson VII. February 18. John 4: 5-26.

Read John 3: 22-4: 45.

Commit Verses 11-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.—John 4: 24.

EXPLANATORY.

5. THEN COMETH HE, on his way from Judea to Galilee. A CITY . . . CALLED SYCHAR. The ancient Shechem between Mts. Ebal and Gerizim. "Sychar" means drunken town, or lying town. THAT JACOB GAVE TO HIS SON JOSEPH. (See Gen. 33: 18-20; 48: 22). "Few places in Palestine, after Jerusalem, have had so much of Bible history connected with them."

6. NOW JACOB'S WELL WAS THERE. "One of the few sites about which there is no dispute." This well, measured in late years by Captain Anderson and by Lieutenant Conder, is seventy-five feet deep, and eight or nine feet in diameter. It was formerly much deeper, but has been filled up for thirty feet or more with rubbish. There are plenty of other springs in the neighborhood, but "the waters of Jacob's well have a great local reputation for purity and flavor amongst the natives of El-Askar and Nablus."

SAT (was sitting) THUS ON (by) THE WELL, probably on the low curb usually placed around wells (Ex. 21: 33), resting, and waiting for the return of his disciples (v. 8).

IT WAS ABOUT THE SIXTH HOUR. Either noon, according to Jewish reckoning, or 6 p. m., according to one method of Roman reckoning, which many learned men think was used by John.

7. THEN COMETH A WOMAN OF (out of) SAMARIA. Not the city of Samaria, seven miles away, but from the country of Samaria; one of Samaritan race and religion. TO DRAW WATER. Dr. Trumbull thinks that she did not come from the city, but that "this was the well of the cornfields, dug there for the express purpose of providing water for those employed in the sowing and the reaping of those fields. Women were often engaged in the labor of the fields, or in ministry to laborers there, and this Samaritan woman seems to have been so employed."

JESUS SAITH UNTO HER. The reason is given in the next verse. The disciples had gone to the city half or three fourths of a mile away (8) TO BUY MEAT, for d. "Not meat," but "provisions," the plural being used in the Greek. GIVE ME TO DRINK. In regard to Oriental customs it is not considered "improper for a man, though a stranger, to ask a woman to let down her pitcher and give him a drink." Jesus asked for the water because he needed it, but he used the request as the best means of preparing the way for his teaching.

9. HOW IS IT THAT THOU, BEING A JEW. "Jesus would be recognized as a Jew by his dress. The color of the fringes on his garments was probably white; that of Samaritans would be blue. Doubtless other peculiarities indicated his nationality." The language certainly had local peculiarities, such as we find in different parts of every country, and which betray the part to which any one belongs. ASK-EST DRINK, etc. "The wonder of the Samaritan woman was that a Jew should seek, by asking and receiving drink, to make a friendly compact with a member of a hostile race." FOR THE JEWS HAVE NO DEALINGS WITH THE SAMARITANS. A remark thrown in by the writer to give the reason for her surprise. They have no dealings of friendly intercourse.

10. IF THOU KNEWEST THE GIFT OF GOD. His son, the Messiah, and the salvation he was bringing to man. THOU WOULDST HAVE ASKED OF HIM. Emphasize the "thou" and "him." "Spiritually, our positions are reversed. It is thou who art weary, and footsore, and parched, close to the well, yet unable to drink; it is I who can give thee the water from the well, and quench thy thirst forever." AND HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN THEE LIVING WATER. "That is, a renewal, springing from an un-failing source (Gen. 26: 19), ever flowing, fresh."

11. SIR, THOU HAST NOTHING TO DRAW WITH. That is, the usual leathern bucket and line. Note her change of tone. "Sir," or "Lord," reveals the dawn of reverence. Unconsciously she gave utterance to a spiritual truth—the water of life beyond our reach, but the rope of faith long enough to reach it."

12. ART THOU GREATER THAN OUR FATHER JACOB? Can you dig a better well, or find sweeter water?

13. WHOSOEVER DRINKETH OF THIS WATER SHALL THIRST AGAIN. This water satisfying only bodily thirst for brief periods, and a type of all worldly supplies for the deeper thirsts of the soul.

Thirst is the type of the intense human desires which impel men to activity, and in the satisfying of which lie happiness, life and progress. Absence of physical moisture from a man's body for a day or two brings indescribable distress, and if continued long will cause death.

14. WHOSOEVER DRINKETH OF THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM. Observe the representation throughout that the water is a gift from Christ to humanity. God's good things can never be bought. Sin has wages, its rewards can be bought, but eternal life is God's gift.

SHALL NEVER THIRST. This does not contradict the Beatitudes, "Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness," but it declares that there is an unfailing supply always at hand for the thirst. Life is made up of a succession of thirsts and their satisfaction. There is no enjoyment unless there is a thirst, and unless the thirst be satisfied. This satisfaction is what is promised in this verse. The reason follows. The water that satisfies is not from without, an external supply, that may fail or be far away, but SHALL BE IN HIM A WELL (a fountain, a spring) OF WATER, SPRINGING UP INTO (unto) EVER-LASTING LIFE (compare John 7: 38, 39). The water to be living must flow forth. As many sided as man is, so many sided is the religion of Jesus. Jesus transforms the whole life, and makes the desert to blossom like the rose. The living waters are inexhaustible because there is no limit to the sources of supply, just as the fountains and springs are filled from the limitless ocean, by means of God's "cloud chariots."

15. SIR, GIVE ME THIS WATER. Her soul is being awakened, and yet she does not fully comprehend his meaning. Hence the next lesson he teaches her in the following verses, the consciousness of her sin and need.

16. GO, CALL THY HUSBAND. A natural request, but leading to her confession of sin.

18. THOU HAST HAD FIVE HUSBANDS. Dr. Van Lennep ("Bible Lands," p. 557), referring to the terrible frequency of divorces among Jews and Muslims at the present day, says: "We have known a man not 40 years of age who had successively married and put away a dozen wives. . . . Women, too, not far advanced in age, are sometimes met with who have been married to a dozen men in succession."

19. I PERCEIVE THAT THOU ART A PROPHET. Both from his knowledge of her past life and from treatment of her sin. Jesus kindly shows the woman her sinful character, convinces her of sin, in order that she may feel her need and then seek for the waters of eternal life.

20. OUR FATHERS WORSHIPPED IN THIS MOUNTAIN. D'Almeida pointing to Mt. Gerizim, at the foot of which they were standing.

21. JESUS SAITH UNTO HER. His answer is admirable, the plain truth told in a way not to repel her. THE HOUR (the time) COMETH WHEN YE SHALL, etc., i. e., when ye shall worship THE FATHER. Showing the loving and a tractive side of God, drawing us to worship above, but unrestricted by time or place.

22. YE WORSHIP YE KNOW NOT WHAT. Better as in R. V., "Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know." The two questions at issue between Jews and Samaritans were those of "holy place" and "holy Scripture." FOR SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS. Literally, the "salvation," the expected salvation, "is of the Jews i. e., proceeds from" them.

23. BUT THE HOUR COMETH, AND NOW IS. The new day has dawned; the Messiah has come. IN SPIRIT designates the worship of the mind and heart, a real, spiritual worship as distinguished from a merely formal worship. IN TRUTH designates sincerity of worship in the true way. FOR THE FATHER SEEKETH SUCH TO WORSHIP HIM. The seeking, the longing for worship is not on our part alone. The Father loves to have true worship, even as parents delight in the love and reverence of their children.

24. GOD IS A SPIRIT. Essentially, absolutely spirit. Therefore true worship must be of the Spirit.

25. I KNOW THAT MESSIAH COMETH. "Messiah" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah," as "Christos" is the Greek translation of it. HE WILL TELL US ALL THINGS. What Jesus had been telling the woman implied that he could tell all things. Therefore she thought that possibly he might be the expected one.

26. I . . . AM HE. Your judgment is right. All that has been foretold of the Messiah is true of me. The woman accepted the truth, for she immediately went out and invited her friends to come. As soon as she recognized the good news and received it in her heart, she spread the news abroad.

NORMAL LESSON. No. 11.

THE NATURE OF SIN.

Sin has generally been divided by theologians into two classes—original sin and actual sin. We cannot do better than adopt that classification.

Original sin is that which is inherent in our fallen nature. In Adam we all fell. (Rom. 5: 19). He was both the natural and moral head of humanity (1 Cor. 15: 22), and he stood as the representative of his posterity (Rom. 5: 12). So we inherit a sinful nature (Job 14: 4; Psa. 51: 5). Now this old-fashioned doctrine has been confirmed from an unlikely source. Science teaches the law of heredity: that certain traits, characteristics, etc., are transmitted from ancestors: not merely physical resemblance, but mental and moral qualities.

We come now to actual sin. Perhaps the clearest, fullest, and most accurate definition is: "a want of conformity to the divine law." "Sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3: 4). The word really means lawlessness. As in the R. V. that verse reads: "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness." So "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3: 20; 7: 7-13.

Many terms are used in Scripture to set forth the nature of sin. Sin is so complex, subtle, a manifold, that numerous and varied words are needed to define it. The following are some of the chief:

1. TRANSGRESSION. Passing over a boundary, doing what is prohibited, Ps. 32: 1. Thus was it with our first parents, Gen. 3: 11. Transgression may be outward—videenced in overt acts, Isa. 55: 7. or it may be inward. Jesus gave us the spiritual interpretation: Matt. 5: 28.

2. There is another word which is sometimes translated simply "Sin," (Ps. 32: 1) which means "missing the mark." Thus there are sins of omission as well as commission. We have left undone the things we ought to have done, Rom. 3: 23.

3. INIQUITY. Which means perversity: that which is turned out of its proper course, or morally distorted. This term is used in a large number of passages, which the student can easily find. All the foregoing words are employed by David in Ps. 32: 1, 2. Our ways are unequal, Ezek. 18: 25, 29.

4. DECEIT AND DECEITFUL. Jer. 12: 2; Jer. 17: 9. And the worst form it takes is when we say we have no sin, 1 John 1: 8, 10.

5. WICKEDNESS. The opposite of goodness. Not merely, however, a negative term, but one denoting the activity, energy, and restlessness of sin Gen. 6: 5; Ps. 7: 9. The devil is "the wicked one," Matt. 13: 19.

6. UNGODLINESS. Which sets forth impiety, irreverence, the lack of veneration for God, Rom. 1: 18; 5: 6.

7. GUILT. Which rather describes the state or condition induced by sin—a condition amenable to punishment and needing atonement, Rom. 3: 19.

Sin takes many forms: secret and open ignorant and wilful, thought, word and deed, etc. In the Word of God many figures are employed to illustrate the nature of sin.

1. STRAYING OR WANDERING, As sheep. Isa. 53: 6.

2. REBELLION. God is a King and want of allegiance or homage to him is sin, Dan. 9: 5; Isa. 30: 9; Ezek. 12: 2.

3. DEBT. To God we owe faith, love, service; and since we have failed to render these we owe satisfaction to his law, Matt. 6: 12; 18: 30. How beautifully Jesus shows the cancelling of the debt, Luke 7: 40-47. A disparity in the debt, but both debtors equally insolvent and at the mercy of the creditor.

4. LOAD. Ps. 38: 4. Bunyon enlarges upon this figure and represents Christian with a great burden, which he loses at sight of the cross.

5. DISEASE. Isa. 1: 5. Puts the soul out of harmony, weakens its powers, and renders it liable to death. Wasting, loathsome, contagious, fatal. Needing divine healing, Isa. 53: 5; Jer. 3: 22; 17: 14.

6. BONDAGE. John 8: 34; Rom. 6: 16-22.

7. DEFILEMENT, POLLUTION, UNCLEANNESS. This aspect of sin is in the Bible everywhere implied. We need cleansing, Ezek. 36: 29; 1 John 1: 7.

Sin has many manifestations, but it is essentially one, and needs to be dealt with in its essence and integral nature, John 1: 29. That God for the faithful saying, 1 Tim. 1: 15. C. W. TOWNSEND.

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